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**LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER: AN EXPLORATION AND ANALYSIS OF
MANAGING CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN TEN EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT CENTRES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

By Jaclyn Murray



**UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
DEPARTAMENTO DE PEDAGOGÍA SISTEMÁTICA Y SOCIAL
PROGRAMA DE DOCTORADO EDUCACIÓN Y SOCIEDAD**

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
CNE	Christian National Education
CTELC	Cape Town Early Learning Centre
ECD	Early Childhood Development
HSRC	Human Science Research Council
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers Organisation of South Africa
NPO	Non Profit Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SEN	Special Educational Needs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to describe and explore how South African Early Childhood Development (ECD) Practitioners and families acknowledge and address the needs of the increasing number of children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in their care. The Practitioners and families were identified through ten ECD centres located in two urban communities in the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa. In this qualitative research study, the values and attitudes held by Practitioners and families vis-à-vis cultural diversity was investigated, along with the knowledge and strategies they employ to manage cultural diversity in ECD programmes. In relation to the data collected, the intercultural education model provides the necessary tools to address the challenges that Practitioners and families face as a result of this increasing learner diversity. Furthermore, this model was used as a framework within which to analyse Practitioner training and to identify and analyse the current practices and diversity pedagogies used by Practitioners. Challenges regarding the fostering of social integration, the promotion of respect for diversity, and the prevention of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and actions on the part of the Practitioners, children, and families, are discussed. In South Africa apartheid has been defeated and the country has done away with profoundly discriminatory policies and practices, which prohibited interaction between people from diverse cultural backgrounds. The previously segregated education system has been unified, resulting in schools and educational centres enrolling culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse learners. This has meant that many Practitioners, themselves having learnt and taught in a monocultural context, must now be equipped to manage cultural diversity in their centres. This is not an easy task considering that South Africa remains a highly stratified society. Contemporary research has shown that the formation of prejudice starts very early in life and is more pronounced in stratified societies. Discriminatory practices in society negatively influence the construction of identity formation which has been observed in children as young as two years. As Practitioners and families play a key role in preparing children for further learning as well as impacting on their social and affective behaviour, it is proposed that a specific intercultural education programme aimed at Practitioners and families be developed to assist them with managing cultural diversity in the early years.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es describir y explorar la manera en que los educadores infantiles y las familias reconocen y atienden las necesidades de cada vez mayor número de niños de orígenes culturales y lingüísticos diversos. En este trabajo desarrollé un estudio exploratorio que se basó en entrevistar educadores de educación infantil que trabajan en diez centros educativos en dos comunidades urbanas situadas en las provincias del Eastern y Western Cape en Sudáfrica. A parte también se entrevistó a familias para tener una idea de cómo se transmite las ideas adquiridas en las escuelas en el seno familiar. En este estudio cualitativo, los valores y las actitudes mantenidas por los educadores y familias en relación a la diversidad cultural en centros de educación infantil fue investigado, junto con los conocimientos y las estrategias que se emplean para la gestión de la diversidad cultural en los programas de educación infantil. Los resultados nos indican que el modelo de educación intercultural proporciona las herramientas necesarias para hacer frente a los desafíos que enfrentan los profesionales, como resultado de la creciente diversidad estudiantil. Además, este modelo es aquí utilizado como un marco para identificar y analizar la formación y

las actuales prácticas de la pedagogía y la diversidad de los educadores infantil que participan en el estudio. Finalmente, se discuten los desafíos en relación con el fomento de la integración social, la promoción del respeto de la diversidad, y la prevención de las actitudes y las acciones racistas, xenófobas y discriminatorias por parte de los educadores, los niños y las familias. Actualmente, Sudáfrica ha eliminado profundamente las políticas y prácticas discriminatorias, que prohibían la interacción entre personas de diversos orígenes culturales. El sistema educativo, previamente separado, se ha unificado, lo que ha comportado la inscripción en las escuelas y centros educativos de estudiantes de diversas culturas, lenguas y religiones. Esto ha hecho que muchos profesionales, formados para enseñar en un contexto monocultural, tengan ahora que estar preparados para gestionar la diversidad cultural en sus centros. Esto no es una tarea fácil, teniendo en cuenta que Sudáfrica sigue siendo una sociedad muy estratificada. Recientes estudios han demostrado que el desarrollo de los prejuicios en las personas se inicia muy temprano en la vida y es más pronunciado en las sociedades estratificadas. Las prácticas discriminatorias en la sociedad influyen negativamente en la construcción de la formación de la identidad, lo cual se ha observado en niños de tan sólo dos años. Teniendo en cuenta que los educadores y las familias desempeñan un papel fundamental en la preparación de los niños para el aprendizaje, así como repercusiones directas en el comportamiento social y afectivo, en el presente estudio se propone un programa de educación intercultural para ser desarrollado por parte de los educadores y familias, ayudando de esta manera a gestionar la diversidad cultural en la infancia.

INTRODUCTION

And a woman who held a babe against her bosom said; Speak to us of Children.

And he said:

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

*They come through you but not from you,
and though they are with you yet they belong not to you.*

*You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
for they have their own thoughts.*

*You may house their bodies but not their souls,
for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.*

You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth.

Extract from 'The Prophet' by Khalil Gibran

South Africa is characterized by a vibrant mix of cultures, languages, beliefs and traditions. It is known as the 'rainbow nation' brought together after decades of totalitarian rule. With the end of apartheid in 1994 many of the barriers built up between people from different cultural backgrounds were destroyed, alongside the segregationist policies which had served as the foundation of the regime. However, decades upon decades of human rights abuses and cross cultural distrust and fear means that today tension still exists among many people, indicated by the extremely high crime rate, the xenophobia which has gripped the land, and the anger and frustration felt by those for whom democracy has brought little benefit thus far.

Within the education sector many changes have occurred, most significantly the move from a previously monocultural education system, to a pluricultural one. The racial groups into which people were classified during apartheid served as the marker against which the education system was designed. The highly unequal access to resources and well-qualified educators meant that the majority of the population received low quality educational opportunities. The experience of learning in a monocultural environment meant that there was a severe lack of interaction across different cultural groups resulting in the development of an acute fear and mistrust of others who were different.

As apartheid came to an end and educational centres began to open up to all learners from different racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, educators were confronted by diverse learner compositions in their classrooms. Naturally, this required a complete overhaul of the approach to education, as well as the need to implement new teaching styles (Le Roux, 2000). Many Practitioners, themselves having been trained in a monocultural setting, have not been adequately equipped to work in pluricultural settings and therefore require specific programmes to provide them with the skills required to manage cultural diversity in their centres and classrooms.

Practitioners working in the Early Childhood Development field have been no less affected by the increasing diversity in the centres at which they teach, especially those located in urban areas. In rural areas ECD centres remain largely homogenous, while in urban areas the increase of people from diverse backgrounds moving into communities located in, or closer to, the town or city has resulted in increased heterogeneity in educational centres. This diversity has given rise to challenges in ECD classrooms and centres, some of which are explored and analysed in this dissertation. To date very few studies have been undertaken which identify the challenges of working in pluricultural ECD centres in South Africa.

In light of this, the study presented here explores the challenges faced by Practitioners working in the ECD field in relation to cultural diversity and the need to foster social integration in the early years. It is identified that children are very open to learning about different values and attitudes in relation to diversity, and that racism, prejudice and discrimination can make an indelible impression in young children and directly affect the values and attitudes they adopt and their concomitant behaviour towards others. If care needs to be taken with regards to how children learn about cultural diversity, their caregivers certainly have an important role to play. For that reason, apart from ECD Practitioners, the families of young children were interviewed for the purpose of this study in order to get their views and thoughts about the need to instil in children respect for cultural and other forms of diversity with the aim of ensuring peaceful and cohesive societies.

The intercultural education approach can provide Practitioners and families with the tools to achieve the paradigm shift needed to effectively teach in a pluricultural environment, building bridges between cultures after decades of enforced segregation, and promoting communication where previously there was none. According to the philosopher Martin Buber, the 'I-you'

relationship is the most fundamental of all human relationships, in that from the other (you) a person derives one's very humanness. In other words, "I become I as a result of my relationship with you" (Ibid: 28). Intercultural contact is therefore fundamental in the culturally diverse classroom, as well as in culturally homogenous classrooms, although this is more difficult to achieve. Through successful management of cultural diversity by the ECD Practitioner and the families of young children, intercultural understanding and respect can be enhanced.

In order to provide the reader with 'the bigger picture', in other words, to gain an understanding of the context within which the ECD centres that participated in this study operate, Chapter one provides a brief historical background of South Africa. This chapter looks back upon the history of the land and attempts to show how the immense diversity of cultures present in South Africa today came into being. Life under apartheid is discussed as it is a part of the country's history which continues to exert a strong influence over what is taking place currently. The need to take into account the social ills which continue to plague the society such as violence, crime, HIV/AIDS, poverty and so forth are considered, as well as the framework provided by the liberal South Africa Constitution as a guiding light in a country which appears to be losing its way. Chapter two discusses the research statement by identifying the research questions and objectives. As each country has its own way of providing ECD services, this chapter provides the reader with an overview of how ECD is implemented within South Africa. Having addressed the aims of this research initiative, Chapter three constructs the theoretical framework of this study. This chapter is divided up into three parts. Part one looks at cultural diversity from a theoretical perspective, which includes analysing concepts such as culture and identity, as well as a discussion of multiculturalism, interculturalism and intercultural education. Part two discusses education in South Africa, looking specifically at educational reform post 1994, how integration in the system has been conceptualised, the insidious role of race and racism, and finally, the current educational plan in relation to cultural diversity. The third and final part of this chapter addresses the social and educational purpose of ECD, looking at young children and diversity as well the role played by ECD Practitioners and families. Five broad schools of thought regarding diversity in ECD centres are examined.

Chapter four describes the research methodology used to carry out the study, outlining the qualitative research approach followed, describing the research setting, identifying the research variables as well as the selection of participants, and the data collection strategies and instruments

utilized. Data analysis as well as strategies to enhance the validity of the data collected is also addressed. Chapter five presents the research findings and as well as the interpretation of these findings. Finally, Chapter six briefly puts forward some recommendations which emerged from the research findings.

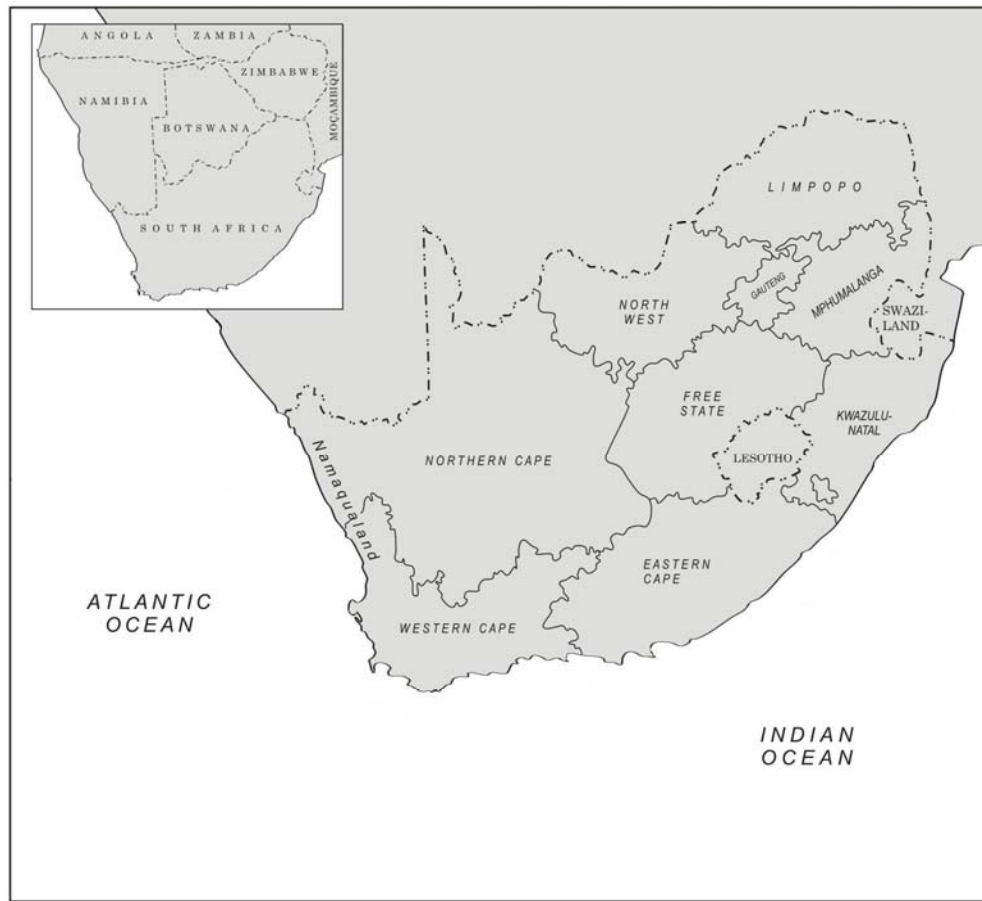
CHAPTER 1: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

1.1 A brief historical background

Located at the southern most tip of Africa where the Indian and Atlantic oceans collide is the Republic of South Africa, home to people from varying cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds who make up its population of approximately 48.7 million inhabitants (Statistics South Africa, 2008). Today South Africa is, and has for many centuries been, an ethnically and linguistically complex society (Kamwangamalu, 2000a). The first known inhabitants of the region were the Khoikhoi and San hunter-gatherers, followed in around A.D. 300 by a group of crop and livestock subsistence farmers – the early ancestors of the current Bantu-speaking population, who then began to drift into the region in small groups from other parts of Africa (Thompson, 1990). In 1487 a Portuguese expedition led by Bartholomeu Dias reached the Southern African shores. The Portuguese did not establish any land settlements as their expedition had made them cautious of the navigational hazards and fearful of the people living there (Ibid). They were followed by the Dutch in 1652 who then settled at the Cape of Good Hope with the aim of establishing a small fortified base where the fleets of the Dutch East India Company who rounded the Cape annually would be able to take on board fresh water, fruit, vegetables, and grain, as well as land their sick to recuperate before they made their way to Asia. However, as the Dutch became more settled, they expanded and began to conquer the local Khoi San people and import additional slaves from Indonesia, India, Ceylon, Madagascar and Mozambique (Ibid). The British colonizers arrived in 1795 to capture the Cape from the Dutch and in so doing added to the diversity of the people already in the region. As a result of sexual interaction between the various groups of people two new ethnic groups came into being, namely the Boer¹ and Coloured² identities.

¹ A distinction must be made here regarding the term ‘Boer’, which is not a commonly used term in present day South Africa. Although the term ‘Boer’ does not translate directly into the modern day usage of the term ‘Afrikaner’, the latter identity arose from the former. Boer is the Dutch word for farmer, while the term Afrikaner is drawn from the language this group of people speak, namely Afrikaans. Today the term is used by a few white Afrikaans-speaking people whose political views are mainly conservative and who claim trekker descent. These people prefer to be called Boers rather than Afrikaners.

² “Coloured” refers to the people of mixed descendant (Unesco 1972: 15).



Map 1: The location of each of the nine provinces that make up South Africa within the Southern African region.

Perhaps the group that most fervently defended their newfound identity was the Boers. The relationship between the settlers, the colonisers and the various African communities had soured considerably by the eighteenth century and resulted in numerous wars between the British, the Africans and the Boers (Gallagher, 2004). After establishing short-lived Boer Republics towards the end of the eighteenth century, which were soon stripped of any power or authority by British Imperialist forces, some of the Boers embarked north on their ‘Great Trek’ in 1834 crossing the Fish and Orange rivers into what they considered to be the ‘promised land’ (Ibid). The Boers believed that the sacred status of their community was confirmed by them firstly having overcome African opposition and secondly to their staking out land for themselves and resisting British authority (Pakenham, 1982 cited in Gallagher, 2004). This journey, along with their pastoralist

way of life, formed the national story of the Boer community. The Anglo Boer War (also known as the South African War) of 1899 – 1902 cemented the split between the English speaking and Afrikaans speaking white community - a divide entrenched by the two World Wars as many Boers sympathised with the Germans perhaps because their hatred of the English was so strong.

There is a history of prolonged contact (some of it friendly) between the various groups of people living in South Africa; but mostly it is a history of much conflict over land and cattle, followed up by industrial conflict as opportunities for industry emerged and the towns began to grow (Unesco, 1972). After the Second World War, white supremacy in the country was perceived to be under threat as 1) other African and Asian states began to gain their independence from colonial rule, and 2) as the demand for the implementation of ‘human rights’ according to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 gained momentum (Ibid). Amidst the growing fear of the whites regarding their minority in numbers in contrast to their Black African counterparts (see Fig. 1), the idea of social and economic equality for all the people living in the land was muted as a direct threat to white privilege. As the authorities had ensured the exclusion of ‘non-whites’³ from the political process through the Constitution of 1910, the all-white National Party won the 1948 elections, giving them the platform from which to engineer a social reality, namely *apartheid*⁴, which denied the majority of the population a voice, essentially denying them respect, dignity and fundamental human rights by the stroke of a pen.

The ideology of apartheid, according to the 1947 election manifesto of the National Party, can be summed up as follows:

‘In general terms our policy envisages segregating the most important ethnic groups and sub-groups in their own areas where every group will be enabled to develop into a self-sufficient unit. We endorse the general principle of territorial segregation of the Bantu and the Whites...the Bantu in the urban areas should be regarded as migratory citizens not entitled to political or social rights equal to those of the Whites. The process of detribalization should be arrested...’

(Unesco, 1972: 16)

Each group was therefore encouraged to maintain its ethnic and cultural identity with the call for the prevention of ‘detribalization’ a clear indication of this. One of the fundamental pillars upon which the apartheid regime rested was the belief that each ethnic group needed to live isolated

³ The term ‘non-whites’ was used to refer to the following ethnic groups: Black African, Asian and Coloured.

⁴ The Afrikaans term ‘apartheid’ translates into ‘separateness’ in English.

from any other grouping in order to ensure a harmonious existence amongst all. Apartheid was thus responsible for creating and enforcing the rigid division of the South African society with “language and ethnicity, read skin colour, being the main pillars of the apartheid divide-and-rule ideology” (Kamwangamalu, 2000b: 1).

Even though the population was divided up into major ethnic groups, language was still used to differentiate within these groups. It is clear that the apartheid system had a static view of the relationship between language and ethnicity (Makoni, 1996 cited in Kamwangamalu, 2001b: 1), seeing both as bounded and homogenous. Each group was therefore required, once the apartheid classification of people had been completed, to submit to ethnic absolutism.

1.2 The rise of apartheid

Both religious discourse and biological essentialism, which were prevalent in Europe at the time, were used by the Boers to support their racist ideology. This is supported by a speech given in 1935 by a future State President of South Africa, Nico Diederichs:

God willed that...at the human level, there should be a multiplicity and diversity of nations, languages and cultures and just as it would be a violation of God's natural law to try to reduce all colours to one colour and all sounds to one sound, everything in nature to one dull monotony so it is just as much of a desecration of His law to destroy the multiplicity of nations in the world for the sake of a monochromatic, monotonous and monolithic humanity.

(Stent, 1994: 53)

Looking to Nazi Germany and its politicised racism for inspiration, Diederichs and his followers believed in the possibility of an exclusively white society, while ironically calling for the preservation of diversity within humanity. This diversity was fine, he believed, just so long as it did not require actual interaction or integration amongst these diverse groups of people. Furthermore, scientific racism, supported by movements such as that of eugenics, solidified the foundation upon which apartheid was built, arguing for the superiority of certain (white) communities over inferior ‘native’ communities (Dubow, 1995).

When the National Party, the political voice of the Afrikaners, won the 1948 elections, the opportunity arose to implement this vision (Gallagher 2004). With their rise to power they

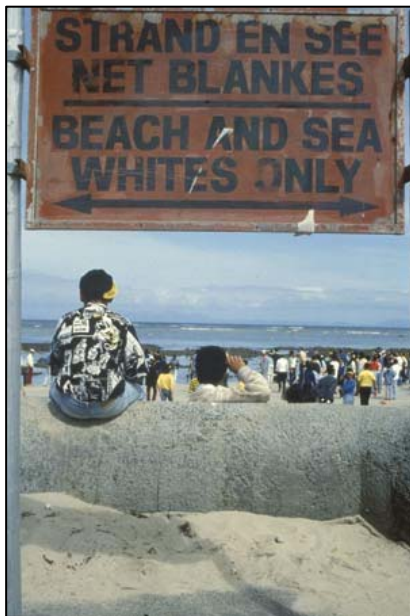
rapidly began establishing both legal and institutional infrastructure to promote the separate development of Black Africans and whites and thereby gain control of both the social and economic systems of South Africa (Chokshi, Carter, Gupta, Martin, & Allen, 1995). The first step was to restrict the voting rights of the African population even though they form approximately seventy nine percent of the total population of the country (see Fig. 1). Thereafter the newly formed government systematically began to codify the diverse ethnic communities into racial groups and introduced a series of discriminatory laws which effectively separated the communities in both the public and private domains (Wilson, 2002). This legislation is outlined in Table 1.

1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act	Prohibition of marriage between whites and other races, and mixed marriages which South Africans obtained abroad were annulled.
1950 Immorality Amendment Act	Prohibition of sexual relations between whites and other races.
1950 Population Registration Act	Codification of the entire population into race communities.
1950 Suppression of Communism Act	Banning of political activity contra government.
1950 Group Areas Act	Physical separation of racial communities by allocating specific parts of the country to different communities.
1952 Pass laws	The Black African population were required to carry internal passports from the age of 16, which could be demanded by the police at any time.
1953 Separate Amenities Act	Provision of separate amenities to Black Africans and whites in public areas and specifically stated that this provision need not be equal.
1953 Bantu Education Act	Determined the curriculum framework of Black African schools and authority given to Minister of Education to close schools which did not adhere to these restrictions.
1959 Extension of University Education Act	Excluded all other racial communities from white universities and established five 'ethnic' universities.
1959 Bantu Self-Government Act	The Black African population was classified into eight ethnic groups. Each group had a Commissioner-General who was tasked to develop a homeland for each, which would be allowed to govern itself independently without white intervention.
1971 Bantu Homelands Citizens Act	Required Black Africans to become citizens of the homeland that responded to their ethnic group, regardless of whether they had ever resided there or not, and removed their South African citizenship.

Table 1: Legislation implemented during apartheid. (Source: Gallagher, 2004)

The Bantu Homeland legislation was of particular importance as it was around this that the vision of apartheid could be fulfilled. The ultimate goal was for the established Bantu Homelands to gain independence, thereby making the South African territory a combination of separate, self-governed states where each racial community could find their place. Of course, this ‘separate development’ did not mean equality between various ethnic communities and was rather “a policy of deliberate inequality built into the educational system, expressed in scientific and cultural activities, and underlined in the regulations governing access to information” (Unesco, 1972: 255).

Apartheid therefore had two distinct aims. The first one was the division of certain groups into self-sufficient tribes through the Homeland policy, while the second aim was to enforce non-white social, economic as well as political inferiority. The separation of people into ethnic groupings was, however, not entirely successful due to the complete economic interdependence among them. The white population required the labour force of the so called ‘non-white’ communities to sustain the industrial and agricultural production, while the ‘non-white’ population needed the job opportunities presented to them in the ‘white’ South Africa (Ibid: 20). The photographs below indicate the extent to which the segregationist policies implemented during the apartheid regime affected the lives of those living in South Africa.



Photographs 1 and 2: The use of public premises was decided upon according to racial classification⁵.

⁵ Source: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic-art/488135/95471/A-South-African-beach-during-the-apartheid-era> and <http://glasspearl.co.za/blog/2009/05/11/apartheid-are-we-repeating-the-past/> respectively.

The political history of South African society has been explicitly structured on the assumption of racial differences and ideas of ‘race’ are *ipso facto* related to the social reality of the country (Dubow, 1995). It was only in 1989 that the country began to accept the possibility of achieving real change after F.W De Klerk was elected State President, more especially when he called for the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. Post a series of tense negotiation processes between leaders of the National Party, the first democratic elections were held in 1994, heralding the official end to the totalitarian regime and marking the beginning of a new era in the country under the leadership of Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC).

The transition from authoritarianism to democracy without severe bloodshed resulted in South Africa becoming known as a “miracle” nation with a brilliant future. The racist and segregationist policies, stringently enforced under apartheid were rapidly repealed and substituted with new, legislated policies based on the principles of human rights, equity and social justice. For the first time in its history the people of South Africa, regardless of the colour of their skin or ethnic identity, could enjoy the right of being a free citizen in the country of their birth. However, although much has been achieved over the last fifteen years, South Africa remains a deeply divided society (Moodley & Adam, 2004), with ethnicity and race still serving as markers according to which society is divided.

1.3 Ethnicity

Anyone writing about South Africa faces an enormous challenge in coping with what Leonard Thompson (1990: xiii) calls a “terminological minefield”. For example, in identifying groups, which terms should we use? The ethnic terms found in documents or should modern terminology be followed? This concern applies to all the groups most commonly referred to as “Black”, “Indian”, “Coloured” and “white”, as this is how South African law under the apartheid regime categorised them. In the post-apartheid state the old racial categorizations are still retained in order to assess progress with regards to transformation as per affirmative action policies⁶ and so forth (Moodley & Adam, 2004). However, there is a need to take a critical look at the use of the

⁶ In South Africa affirmative action (sometimes referred to by euphemisms such as ‘corrective action’, ‘reverse discrimination’, or ‘positive action’) is defined as a remedial strategy which seeks to address the legal historical exclusion of a majority (Adam, 1997).

above-mentioned terms. For the purpose of this study I will make use of the following terminology when distinguishing between the various ethnic groupings: Black Africans, Asians (people of predominantly Indian and Chinese descent), Coloureds (people of mixed descent), and whites (both English and Afrikaans speakers).

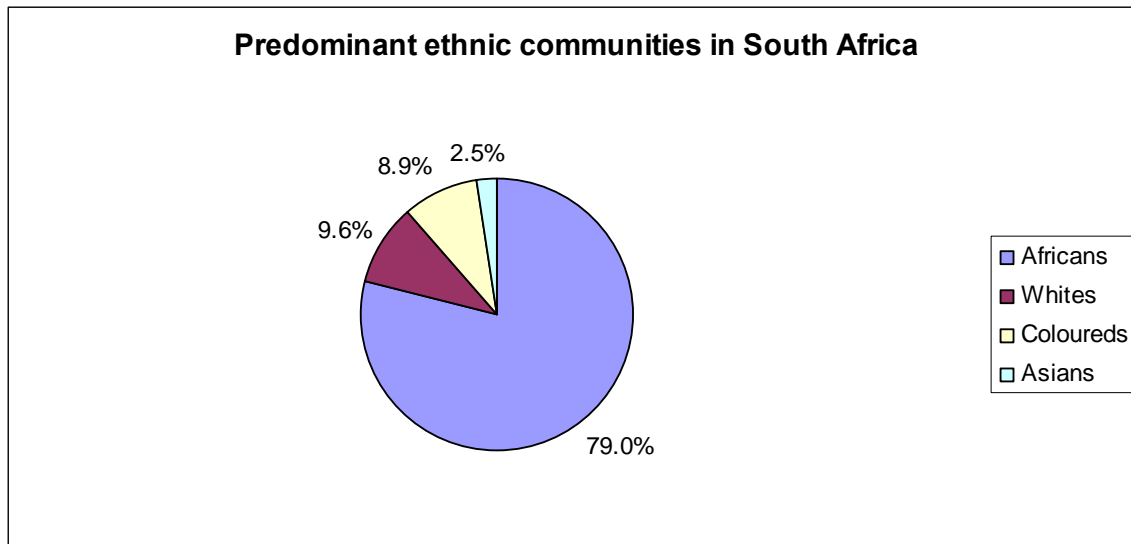


Figure 1. Pie chart indicating the percentage of the population that falls into one of the four predominant ethnic groups living in South Africa. Data taken from the 2001 South African Census (Statistics South Africa, 2001).

I am fully aware of the need to show the nuances of such terminology and the obvious danger in ‘lumping’ a vast majority of people under the banner of “Black African” or “Asian”, “Coloured” or “white”. These groups are themselves each made up of people with varying linguistic, cultural and religious identities. In addition the actual meaning of the terms can be misleading and can deny people the right to identify themselves as they choose. As Moodley and Adam (2004: 181) clearly state, for example, “the common label of *African* for the Black majority does not preclude that the members of the other groups are also African in the political sense of citizens belonging to the African continent as their only home and origin”. In order to proceed, the ethnic groupings mentioned above will need to be employed; but, the diversity present within these groupings must be noted and respected.

1.4 Language

I turn now to the linguistic diversity of the people of South Africa, which paints a clearer picture of the extent to which the ethnic groups mentioned above are by no means homogenous. South Africa is a multilingual country with eleven official languages, all afforded equal status by the Constitution. These languages are: Afrikaans, English, IsiNdebele, IsiXhosa, IsiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, SiSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. The percentage of the population speaking each of these languages and claiming it as their mother-tongue is outlined in the pie chart below.

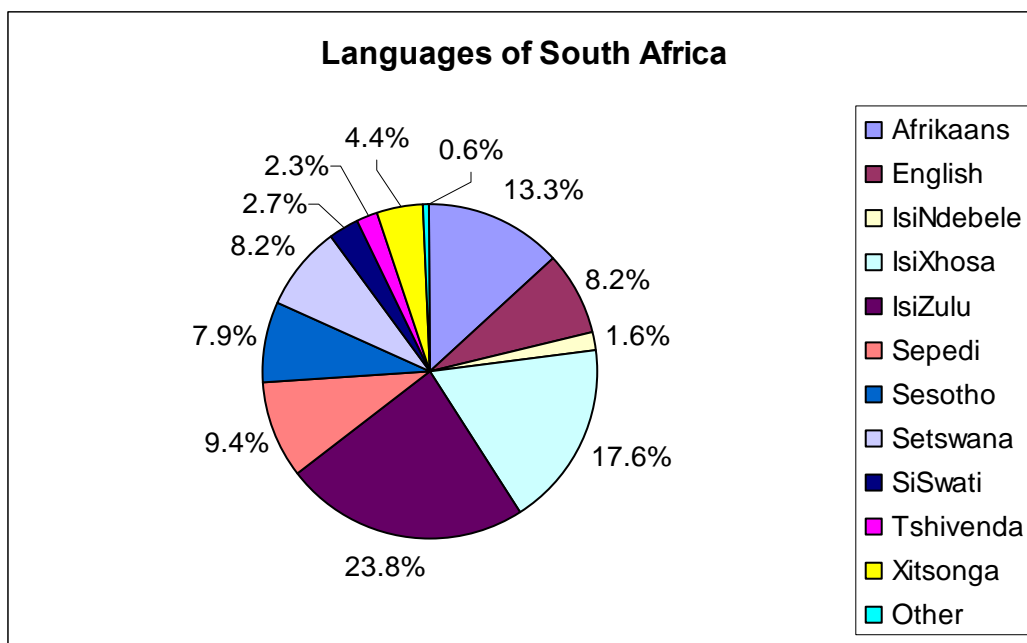


Figure 2. The percentage of the population that speaks the language represented in the above pie chart as their home language is indicated. Data taken from the 2001 South African Census (Statistics South Africa, 2001).

There is a high degree of provincial variation with regards to the languages spoken. The language spoken most widely across South Africa is IsiZulu, which is also the dominant language in the Province of Kwazulu Natal (see Map 1). IsiXhosa is spoken by approximately eighty percent of the population living in the Eastern Cape Province. It may appear surprising that Afrikaans is the third most often spoken language in the country, but when one takes into consideration that it is the home language of a large proportion of the Coloured community (and

not only that of the Afrikaner community), it seems more plausible. It is also the most commonly spoken language (55.3%) in the Western Cape Province (Statistics South Africa, 2001).

English is generally used as the language of business, politics and the media even though it is the home language of only 8.2 percent of the population. The English language played an important role in the democratisation of South Africa, heralded by many as the language of liberation after years of being denied access to opportunities beyond the nation's borders (presumed to be made possible through the medium of English). English was also the language used during the process of negotiating the South African Constitution and continues to be "the main language and almost exclusive language of the National Assembly and the provincial legislation" (Ridge, 2000: 167).

Besides the eleven official languages, the South African Constitution (Founding Provisions, 1996: 1245) calls for the promotion and the creation of conditions for the development and use of the Khoi Nama and San languages, as well as Sign Language for the deaf. Furthermore, it promotes and ensures respect for:

- (i) all languages commonly used by communities in South Africa, including German, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Portuguese, Tamil, Telegu and Urdu; and
- (ii) Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit and other languages used for religious purposes in South Africa.

South Africa is therefore clearly a plurilingual state, serving as further representation of the diversity of the population. However, much still needs to be achieved to ensure that all the languages enjoy equal status in the public domain.

1.5 The current social context

Post-apartheid South Africa is battling against deeply entrenched inequalities, high levels of poverty, crime and HIV/AIDS, and increasing social tensions stemming from a lack of delivery on election promises by the government as well as the influx of socio-economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. There are more than five million foreign nationals living in South Africa, predominantly from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi, Angola, Congo, Somalia and Nigeria, many having come here to escape certain death in their own countries.

Xenophobia has taken root in various poor and informal settlement communities around the country in which these immigrants live alongside their South African counterparts, culminating in horrific attacks and murders. In May 2008 in the shack settlement of Alexandria on the outskirts of Johannesburg, a frightening wave of attacks was orchestrated with mobs seeking out African foreign nationals, burning all that they own and quite literally chasing them out of the community. As a result of these attacks more than sixty-two people have been killed and many more injured, while thousands of refugees have opted to flee back to Mozambique and to Zimbabwe. Thirty thousand men, woman and children flocked to temporary places of safety set up at police stations, community halls and churches, and are now considered ‘displaced’ (Khupiso, 28 July 2008). Although African foreign nationals are under siege, the lines are blurred and some locals have also been caught up in the violence having been accused of being of foreign origin. Today it is the Shangaans from Mozambique⁷, the Zimbabweans and the Malawians who are targeted, and if issues are not addressed head on, the scene is set for a grim replay, and who knows, may include Pakistani’s, Chinese and perhaps all those who are not from the same ethnic ‘tribe’ as the perpetrators. It is not possible to define levels of “foreignness” and as long as anyone is under attack, the whole society is under attack.

Many of the attacks against African foreign nationals are occurring at the hands of teenage boys who have formed a campaign entitled the “Kwerekwere-Free Society” (*Foreigner-Free Society*), which is a matter of grave concern. Armed with machetes and crowbars, they move from door to door conducting raids to ‘weed out’ suspected foreigners from the community. They ‘test’ people whom they believe to be of foreign origin by asking them the name for “elbow” and “tears” in the IsiZulu language. A member of this group scornfully remarked that “These people [foreigners] cannot even pronounce easy words like *indolowane*... We have a list of other words that we tell them to say and they fumble and bite their tongues” (Ibid). These gangs freely roam the streets concomitantly to the government promoting its plan to re-integrate these African foreign nationals back into the communities from which they fled. A man from Mozambique who is living outside a police station for safety reasons, states that the government’s plan will not work as there is too much hatred. He goes on to say that “Even

⁷ However, because of Africa’s colonial past many tribes found themselves divided as citizens of neighbouring countries and there are today, for example, Shangaans living in the Limpopo Province of South Africa as well.

children are taught to sing demeaning songs about us...Surely there is no future for us in this country” (Ibid).

Poverty is seen as one of the key factors for the hatred and violence that is being perpetrated within these already marginalised communities. Post-1994 people oppressed under the apartheid regime hoped to see their aspirations met and their lives bettered. They hoped for improved living conditions, access to clean running water, sanitation, basic health care and education. For some, these aspirations were met, for the vast majority they continue to be a pipe dream.

A recent study by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) (Reddy, 2006: 76) confirms that the situation of most people, post-apartheid, has not altered dramatically over the last fourteen years:

Apartheid in South Africa came to an end with the democratically held elections of 1994. South African society is, however, still characterised by high levels of poverty and enormous inequality – unwelcome legacies of the apartheid era. The latest UNDP report (2005) estimates that at least one-third of the population is living on less than \$ 2 a day, with 11.1 per cent living on less than \$1 a day. The Gini co-efficient, which measures (among other things) national income distribution, was 0.6 in 2001. This demonstrates that South Africa (along with Brazil) has one of the most unequal income distributions in the world (Statistics South Africa 2002). Africans, still struggling with the harsh consequences of apartheid rule, represent the poorest group.

This extract clearly shows that many citizens continue to be extremely marginalised within the South African society and that much still needs to be done to achieve equality amongst all people. Socio-economic inequality is nowhere more apparent than in the education and health systems. In education, for example, many schools face crippling backlogs in the provision of basic infrastructure, learning materials and resources as well as qualified teachers (Ibid). However poverty, in itself, is not an excuse and cannot be used to justify the senseless and violent attacks waged against other Africans. Many South Africans sought refuge and aid in other African countries during the apartheid years, and South Africans therefore need to learn to show the same understanding and empathy in these trying times.

Another issue that beleaguers the South African society is the scourge of HIV/AIDS. According to the UNAIDS and World Health Organisation report (2007) the HIV/AIDS pandemic is one of the biggest crises facing humanity at the moment, with Sub-Saharan Africa being the region most affected by this global epidemic. Southern Africa is most severely affected,

accounting for 35 percent of all people living with HIV as well as almost one third (thirty two percent) of all new HIV infections and AIDS deaths globally in the year 2007 (Ibid). South Africa is the country with the largest number of HIV infections in the world, with the national adult HIV prevalence rate exceeding fifteen percent (Ibid). Due to the mostly heterosexual transmission of the virus⁸ (where more than one partner is the norm amongst men), women bear the brunt of the disaster and are unable to enforce responsible male sexual behaviour because of the strong patriarchal tradition that persists in the society (Moodley & Adam, 2004).

To date government intervention has been slow and completely inadequate. During the presidency of Thabo Mbeki, and against all documented scientific evidence, government chose not to be convinced that HIV causes AIDS (Ibid). With such blatant ignorance and subsequent lack of action, it is hardly surprising that HIV/AIDS has taken such a firm hold in the country. Besides government impotence, the stigma that still surrounds the disease also contributes to discriminatory and prejudicial practice. As HIV infected persons are often stigmatised and shunned by their families and communities, many people prefer not to be tested for the disease. This is confirmed by the South African Health Review (Stevens, Sinanovic, Regensberg, & Hislop, 2007) which reports that denial, fear of disclosure and intolerance still persists in the society today.

The reality of both petty and violent crime is another factor which affects the daily life of all South Africans. One of the most disturbing realities is the rampant sexual violence against women and children (Moodley & Adam, 2004). According to the South African Health Review (Ntuli, 2002) thirty nine percent of teenage girls report being forced to have sex. More than half a million children are violated annually, a third of all rapes are gang rapes, forty-one percent of reported rape victims were under 18 years of age and 15 percent under 12 years of age (Ibid). Another terrifying statistic is that almost half of the sexual assaults reported were committed by offenders younger than 18 years of age (Terreblanche, 2002 cited in Ntuli, 2002). Crime is clearly completely out of hand in South African society and the police appear powerless to act. In some areas the police have resorted to employing local security firms to protect them. The extremely violent nature of the crimes alludes to a perverse and sick society with much moral and ethical rejuvenation required. It is only when people have no respect for life, theirs, or that of

⁸ Moodley and Adam (2004) state that this is in contrast to the West where twice as many men than women are infected with the virus.

another, that atrocious crimes such as those mentioned above can be committed with little or no regard for the Constitution or the rule of law.

1.6 Into the future

Post-1994 South Africa adopted a new Constitution which has been hailed as one of the most liberal and “state of the art” Constitutions in the world, and provides the framework for the construction of a democratic and just society (Moodley & Adam, 2004). The preamble clearly introduces the new era which began in South Africa post-apartheid, and is worth quoting:

We, the people of South Africa, recognise the injustices of our past; honour those who suffered for injustice and freedom in our land; respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity. We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to – Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights; Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law; Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations. May God protect our people.

(Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Preamble, 1996)

Although the Constitution provides a clear description of what is to be achieved, there is a great need for solid, practical ideas around *how* to achieve the transformation within society so desperately required. In order to achieve real and lasting change within its people, to counter its “authoritarian and racist past, current lawlessness, vast unemployment, spreading HIV pandemic, and huge illiteracy rates” (Moodley & Adam, 2004: 170), concrete and contextualised approaches are required.

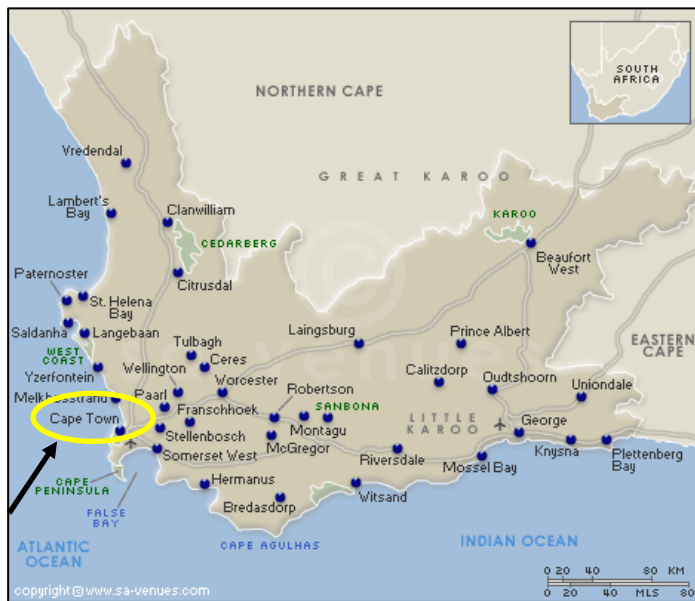
CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH STATEMENT

2.1 Problem Statement

A real need exists to address the social challenges that continue to plague South Africa fifteen years into its democracy. One of the most pressing issues is that of population diversity and how it may be possible to counter racist and xenophobic attitudes still so prevalent in this society. One sphere in which this can be addressed is within the education system, starting in the early years. This is especially important in an education system that has a history of being divided across lines of colour and ethnic identity, and which had as its objective to *actively construct* a society based on the principles of inequality and human disgrace (Porteus, 2004).

Although South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 was a pivotal turning point in eliminating and reversing oppressive and marginalizing educational policies and practices, the relationship between the political commitments to providing educational opportunities that respect, for example, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity, and the actual implementation of these commitments, have not been sufficiently investigated.

An extensive literature review, lengthy discussions with ECD specialists, as well as information gleaned from previous research undertaken revealed that no specific intercultural educational programme is in place in early childhood development programmes in the majority of ECD centres in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape Provinces of South Africa.



Maps 2 and 3 highlighting the two research sites: Cape Town in the Western Cape Province (left) and Queenstown situated in the Eastern Cape Province (Right).

The purpose of this study is, therefore, to *describe and explore* how ECD Practitioners respond to an increasing number of children from diverse cultural backgrounds in ten Early Childhood Development centres located in two urban communities of South Africa. It is hoped that through this investigation a better understanding is achieved of what takes place in these classrooms and how challenges that arise are dealt with by Practitioners. It is also the aim of this research to direct future research regarding the phenomenon of dealing successfully with cultural diversity in ECD centre-based programmes.

As stated in the Preamble to the South Africa Constitution (1996), it is imperative that as a society we “heal the divisions of the past” and work together in constructing a society based on democratic values, social justice, as well as fundamental human rights. In order to integrate this goal within the broader education system, the Department of Education (2000) has developed guiding values to influence all levels of education. The key values which should be promoted include equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and honour. Within this framework of values, learning centres have been tasked with developing both the intellectual and critical capacities of all learners, as well as to challenge discrimination and prejudice on the grounds of race, gender and culture (Williams & Samuels, 2001).

2.2 The rationale of the study

We have set out on a quest for true humanity, and somewhere on the horizon, we can see the glittering prize. Let us march forth with courage and determination, drawing strength from our common plight and our brotherhood. In time, we shall be in a position to bestow on South Africa the greatest possible gift - a more human face.

Steve Biko (1988)

Several studies have shown that children as young as three years are racially conscious and are able to display negative attitudes towards people from different cultural backgrounds (Mac Naughton, 2006). Values and attitudes therefore develop very early on in the socialisation process of children, making the early years a crucial period for the introduction of democratic and human rights values. Families and Practitioners have a critical part to play in this process and are unwittingly tasked with the great responsibility of creating environments which value diversity and encourage active engagement with a range of people.

Programmes on diversity and social integration in early childhood education have been implemented in various countries around the world as early childhood centres offer services to children from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds. However, even in places without a diverse student population, the need to address issues of diversity and social integration has become a priority. As noted above, a review of existing literature, discussions with early childhood development professionals in South Africa, as well as my past research experiences has revealed a dearth of research on how cultural diversity affects the learning and teaching environment within the field of early childhood development in South Africa. Most of the research that is currently available regarding ECD focuses predominantly on policy issues and the implementation of the Reception year (Grade R) (see L. Biersteker, 2001; Department of Education, 2001; NAPTOSA, 2001; Valley, 2001; and Atmore, 2006). Furthermore, programmes focused on social inclusion and diversity have unwittingly been almost entirely focused on children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). Although this is a very important focus area, the concept of diversity education needs to be broadened within South Africa.

There is currently a tendency to use mathematics and literacy as the cornerstones of education, especially since the economic competition discourse is commonplace (OECD, 2006). Although these are indeed fundamental areas which create a solid base upon which future learning can be built, there is a need to rethink the aim of education, to create a vision of education which takes into account the need to provide children from a young age with an environment which stimulates interaction across all barriers. Centres and schools need to be conceptualised as places where it is important to respect one another and where negotiations are employed when conflicts arise. Family involvement is essential, and healthy Practitioner-family relationships provide continuity between what is being modelled at home and within the more formal educational environment.

In most cases ECD centres operate as “places where the family meets the public environment, and should be viewed as a transition between the private and public domain” (Vandenbroeck, 2007). ECD centres, therefore, play an important role in the socialization of children and in many instances for their families as well. These centres are places where diverse groups of people get together and therefore have the potential to build bridges across cultural and socioeconomic divisions (Ibid). This is corroborated by Friendly (2007), who writes that ECD programmes are especially valuable because they are multi-purpose, playing a key role for more than one group of people simultaneously.

Although all stages of learning are important, early childhood is a critical moment in which the foundations for future development can be established. It is in these first years that the child creates and reinforces his/her identity, and provides an opportune moment to create positive awareness about diversity (Lee & Van Keulen, 2007). It is also a time when children learn about the world to which they are exposed, including their families, their classmates, other people they know, the media, books and the toys with which they play (Ibid).

Finding out about the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of Practitioners and families and gaining insight into oppressive social and institutional practices is an important step towards developing a specific intercultural education project that can contribute towards breaking down prejudice and promoting non-discriminatory attitudes, encouraging people to accept diversity as something that enriches communities instead of being something that threatens both individual and collective identities.



A Practitioner engaging with learners in an ECD centre in Queenstown, South Africa

Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray.

This study, therefore, hopes to stimulate thought and discussion about diversity and intercultural education within the early childhood development setting. This project is investigative orientated and it is hoped that the findings from this research effort can assist with highlighting some of the key challenges faced by early childhood Practitioners working in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms and offer insights regarding support strategies that could be offered to Practitioners and families as they raise children in an increasingly diverse world.

In light of the contextual overview presented in Chapter one of this work, it is not sufficient for South Africa to simply try to rebuild the nation from a neutral starting point; there is no neutral starting point. Instead the real work lies in transforming a society that was previously designed to meet objectives which were in fact hostile to those of a democratic society, starting with its youngest citizens and the adults who care for them. The education system at all levels plays a fundamental role in re-shaping this pluricultural society, particularly in relation to fostering positive intercultural relations, and to completely reset the foundations upon which the ‘old’ South Africa was built. In this way the intercultural education approach offers a good starting point upon which a foundation of understanding and respecting diversity

can be built, and, at the same time ensure that people's identities do not feel threatened or weakened by cultural exchanges that are inevitable in a pluralistic society.

2.3 The phenomenon under study: Cultural diversity in Early Childhood Development programmes

An important part of undertaking any study is the ability to narrow the intended focus of the research sufficiently in order to make it 'do-able'. Using the phenomenon of cultural diversity in ECD classrooms as a starting point, we began to determine where our research interests truly lay, namely, what aspects of this phenomenon we wished to know more about. Having had experience working alongside ECD Practitioners in the classroom setting, as well as being involved in various aspects of ECD Practitioner training programmes, I was particularly interested in discovering how they experience working in culturally diverse classrooms, and if they are not working in largely diverse classrooms, whether they feel it is an important aspect of their work with the children. In light of this interest we developed the following research questions and objectives.

2.4 Research questions

- What values do Practitioners and families hold in relation to cultural diversity?
- How do these values and attitudes impact on the social integration of children from diverse cultural backgrounds in ECD centres?
- What knowledge and strategies do Practitioners make use of to promote social integration amongst children from diverse cultural backgrounds?
- What do Practitioners believe are important aspects of an intercultural educational programme in ECD centres?

Taking into account the above-mentioned research questions, the following general and specific research objectives were identified.

2.5 General research objective

Describe and analyse how Practitioners deal with cultural diversity and facilitate the social integration of children aged 3-6 years in early childhood development centres situated in two urban communities in the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces of South Africa.

2.5.1 Specific research objectives

- 1.) Identify what values and attitudes, knowledge and strategies Practitioners and families believe are important to promote the social integration of children from diverse cultural backgrounds in ECD centres.
- 2.) Analyse what factors facilitate or inhibit communication between Practitioners and families in a pluricultural context.
- 3.) Analyse how Practitioner training could be improved in order to provide Practitioners with the necessary instruments to implement an intercultural educational programme in their respective ECD centres.

2.6 Early Childhood Development in South Africa

Having identified the main aims of this research project, it is necessary to briefly locate ECD within the South African education system. The overview which follows hopes to clarify any doubts that the reader might have regarding what is meant by the term 'Early Childhood Development' and what this means within the South African context.

Africa has the youngest population in the world (The World Bank Group, 2008). In sub-Saharan Africa 130 million children are below six years of age, making up 20 percent of its total population (Ibid). With figures like these it is clear that there is a great responsibility on the part

of African governments to ensure that the needs and rights of their countries young children are met. One of the ways in which this can be facilitated is through the implementation of quality Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes.

In South Africa, an integrated approach to child development has been adopted and takes into consideration a child's health, nutrition, education, psychosocial well-being, as well as additional environmental factors within the context of the family and the community (Department of Education, 2001). The term Early Childhood Development (ECD) is relatively new in South Africa and encompasses an “ideological and political struggle towards the creation of a society founded on human rights, which acknowledges the centrality of childhood in human and social development and children as individuals and citizens” (Williams & Samuels, 2001: 5). Families, Practitioners, communities and government have therefore all been tasked with the responsibility of helping children develop to not only realize their full potential, but to also be prepared to be active, responsible citizens in their respective societies. Without qualitative intervention in the early years the gap between the ‘haves and the have-nots’ widens exponentially year by year.



Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray

Development in early childhood is greatly affected by the socio-economic circumstances that children find themselves in. According to Bray (2002), in South Africa it is clear that children are disproportionately represented among the poor and that there has been no drastic decrease in the number of children living under poverty thresholds. Various studies undertaken

estimate that between 58 and 75 percent of South African children live below the poverty line⁹ (Porteus, 2004). For children living in poverty it is in the first years of her/his life that s/he is most vulnerable and therefore poses the greatest threat for healthy development and growth.

Although child rights have formed a central conceptual pillar for post-apartheid policy development, Porteus (2004: 339) writes that:

The processes of early childhood development (ECD) have been widely relegated to the periphery of policy attention, particularly in the education sector. Further, the policy and development choices have not been orientated to affect massive redress; the current trajectory of development carries the danger of deepening the inequalities facing young children.

These inequalities predominantly affect African children whose parents not only bore the brunt of fragmented and inequitable ECD provisioning during the apartheid years, but who continue to be hardest hit by the ills of the current socio-economic context. According to Williams and Samuels (2001), during apartheid one in three white children received ECD services compared with one in eight Asian and Coloured children and one in sixteen Black African children. Today, social inequalities, inadequacies and racist practices have deeply affected and continue to affect especially poor Black African children in South Africa. Today, the legacy of socio-economic inequalities has resulted in poverty, low levels of nutrition, inadequate access to health care and education, which all serve to undermine the development of children at all levels. The quality of the care received is still differentiated along the basis of race and class, with Black African children living in rural areas most severely affected.

Additional factors which greatly affect the livelihoods of children include adult unemployment in households where children are members, health concerns such as poverty-related childhood illnesses and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Porteus, 2004). The most common poverty-related illness faced by children is stunting¹⁰. The National Food Consumption Survey undertaken in the year 2000 suggests that as many as one in two children in South Africa have an intake of less than half the recommended levels of important nutrients. HIV/AIDS also greatly affects the lives of children in South Africa. As Porteus (2004: 345) notes: “The full story of the

⁹ See the October Household Survey (OHS, 1998-1999); the Income and Expenditure Surveys (IES, 2005); and the 1994 PSLSD data (Haarman, 1999), cited in Bray (2002).

¹⁰ This term refers to children who have not grown as tall as they should have in relation to their age, and is an indicator of long-term under-nutrition (Porteus, 2004).

physical and emotional challenges of the pandemic on the lives of children and the new types of support that children require are only just beginning to unfold”.

To those working within the early childhood sector, the benefits of ECD to children, their families and the larger community, is irrefutable (Arnold, 2004). Although there has been a marked increase in interest, as well as investment in ECD around the world, the political will to put young children first and ensure that their rights are met, is nowhere near adequate as yet (Ibid). The White Paper Number 5 (Department of Education, 2001: no page number specified), the largest ever public sector policy commitment to the ECD sector in South Africa (L. Biersteker, 2001), states that the government of South Africa expects to increase access to ECD programmes, improve the quality of such programmes and provide South Africa’s youngest citizens with a solid foundation for lifelong learning and development in the 21st century.

However, there are a great many obstacles that still need to be addressed and overcome if this commitment is to be met. Before a nationwide audit of ECD provisioning was undertaken in 2000, very little accurate information was available with regards to the nature and the extent of ECD provision, services and resources across South Africa (Williams & Samuels, 2001). The dearth of information proved extremely problematic as information was needed to inform policy and support emerging initiatives taking hold in this vital sector. To date the findings presented in this audit are still the most up-to-date and comprehensive with regard to ECD provisioning in the country. A serious limitation of the audit, and acknowledged as such by the authors, is its inability to describe the “tenor of day-to-day care or educational activities, differentiate between custodial and educational care, or suggest the propensity for innovation or stagnation” (Porteus, 2004: 349). The need for more qualitative studies is recognized here as imperative in order to achieve understanding of what is *actually* happening within centres caring for and educating young children.

2.6.1 The location of ECD within the education system

In South Africa the structure of ECD is different to that of some other countries, for example Spain, where children either fall into the 0-3 year level or the 3-6 year level. In South Africa ECD is made up of three components, namely, Pre-Reception Year programmes which cater to children from birth to four years, Reception Year (Grade R) programmes for children aged five to six years, and what is commonly referred to as the ‘Foundation Phase’ for children

aged seven to nine. However, an overlap occurs as Grade R is officially part of the Foundation Phase. Table 2 locates ECD within the broader formal education system.

Location of Early Childhood Development within the South African Education System			
	Age of child	Education level	Responsible
Higher Education	18+ years	Post school training	Department of Education
Secondary Schooling	14 – 18 years	Grade 8 - 12	Department of Education
Primary Schooling	10 – 13 years	Grade 4 - 7	Department of Education
Early Childhood Development	7 – 9 years	Grade 1 - 3	Department of Education
	5 – 6 years	Reception Year (Grade R)	Department of Education
	Birth – 4 years	Pre-Reception Year Programmes	Departments of Social Development and Health

Foundation Phase

Table 2: Location of ECD within the formal South African education system, indicating the official age of the children in the corresponding education level, as well as the government departments responsible for each educational stage. Table

Although at the policy level Grade R falls within the ten years compulsory schooling, evidence from the Department of Education (2007) states that “the majority of Grade R classes at schools are under sourced with very little or no support from the management of the school”. The Reception Year is therefore not always regarded as an integral part of the Foundation Phase of compulsory schooling, but rather as an ‘add-on’, which does not subject it to the same rigorous requirements in terms of quality (NAPTOSA, 2001). The lack of a cohesive, national delivery plan for Grade R, as well as a shortage of sufficiently qualified Practitioners means that the policy commitments are not necessarily being implemented at the grassroots level. As the NAPTOSA (2001) critique states: “Policies, even excellent ones, do not automatically become a reality without a careful, coherent plan for implementation”.

Although government has responded to Pre-Reception Year programmes with a National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (known as Tshwaragano Ka Bana), it is vague and the financial implications are not spelt out (Atmore, 2007). The responsibility for this age cohort fall predominantly on the Department of Social Development, although the integrated plan calls for collaboration between the Departments of Education, Social Development and Health to ensure effective programmes for 0-4 year olds.

2.6.2 Centre-based ECD services

A centre-based model is the dominant one with regards to the educational care for young children in South Africa. There are two main categories of ECD institution-based provision, namely public and independent (Department of Education, 2001). Public ECD centres are financed by Provincial Departments of Education and / or Social Development and provide services for children aged 0-6 years¹¹. A large variety of ECD services and programmes are available in the category of independent institutions, which account for 83% of ECD institutions. They are funded through fees paid by parents, community fundraising or donations of materials or in kind. The government provides little or no financial support to most of these centres (Ibid). The White Paper states that independent ECD provision includes:

- ❖ The Reception Year (Grade R) at independent schools
- ❖ The Reception Year attached to public schools, but managed by the school governing body and operated by a private individual or the community
- ❖ Independent pre-primary schools that provide for children from 3-5 years of age
- ❖ Privately operated or community run crèches or nursery schools that provide for children from birth to 5 years
- ❖ Home-based provision for children from birth to 5 years.

¹¹ The Department of Education subsidises children in the 5-6 year age cohort, while the Department of Social Development provides subsidies for children aged 0-4 years.



Children attending centre-based ECD programmes in the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces, South Africa.
Photographs taken by Jaclyn Murray

According to the findings of the National ECD Audit (Williams & Samuels, 2001) approximately half of all the sites audited are situated in community settings, a third are home-based and less than one fifth are located in primary schools. Community-based sites, along with independent pre-primary schools, constitute the largest groups of providers. It is therefore clear that in terms of ECD provisioning the independent centres are responsible for educating and caring for the majority of children who are enrolled in ECD programmes across the country.

Community-based ECD centres are able to operate at a cost considerably lower than primary school based provision. In the latter the Practitioners are employed by the government, while Practitioners at the community-based ECD centres are selected and paid by the communities¹². Table 3 highlights some of the key differences between these two types of institutions.

	Community-based sites	Primary and Reception sites
Salaries (monthly income)	Estimated at R492 per practitioner per month at non-subsidised sites & R688 at subsidised sites	R6 700 per practitioner per month
Average parent fees charged per month	R 38.00	R 12.90
Primary school nutrition programme	No	Yes
Classroom infrastructure	Responsibility of community	Responsibility of state
Educational equipment	Responsibility of community	Responsibility of state for Grade 1 and governing body for Grade R

Table 3. Cost of community-based sites as compared to primary and reception sites. Source: Biersteker, 2001.

¹² Some communities are so poor that Practitioners only get what is called a “soap” - when families in the community club together at Christmas time to give the Practitioner a small amount of money.

Since community-based ECD provision is the most common, and taking cognisance of the fact that many communities around the country are poverty stricken, educating their children becomes a huge financial burden for many families. In addition, community-based sites earn ten to fourteen times *less* than Practitioners employed at primary and reception sites. Community-based sites also rely heavily on parent fees and community generosity to equip their respective centres with materials and resources and to buy food to feed the children. The quality of the care and education that children who attend community-based centres receive can be negatively affected by these circumstances. This is of great concern as studies have shown that while high quality ECD services can greatly benefit children living in impoverished circumstances, bad quality services can in fact harm the child (Biersteker, 2001). Furthermore, although I address only the centre-based model of educational care for young children in this dissertation, various additional models of care are employed. Indeed, the range and scope of ECD services that have been developed to support families and communities and thereby provide children with safe and nurturing learning environments, is enormous. However, as the centre-based model is dominant in South Africa, it is here that I will focus my attention.

2.6.3 The Non-Profit Organisation Sector

A lack of government involvement has resulted in many of the community and home-based centres relying heavily upon the ECD Non-Profit Organisation¹³ (NPO) sector for training, the sourcing of funding, materials and resources, as well as for programmatic and administrative information and assistance. Porteus (2004) acknowledges that within this context of government's neglect of ECD provisioning, the ECD NPO sector "emerged as the main provider, being an important source of creative and quality innovation". The training of ECD Practitioners is perhaps where the NPOs have been most involved. By 1958 most training courses for Black African teachers had been restricted, while those for whites were allowed to continue (Williams & Samuels, 2001). The phasing out of lower level teacher training courses by 1990 was a clear indication of the state's unwillingness to invest in the development of a comprehensive range of preschool services. The bulk of the work therefore fell upon community organisations and NPOs.

¹³ These NPOs include training organizations, and community and faith-based organizations. Previously the term 'Non Government Organisations' (NGOs) was more commonplace.

This resulted in the growth of a vibrant NPO sector, which undertook “extremely valuable work with respect to provision and the training of ECD Practitioners that proliferated in the 1980s and ‘90s”, and which continues to play a valuable role in the collaborative development of ECD policy and provisioning (Ibid: 9). The importance of this sector for ECD is further highlighted by the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Plan (2005) which states that most of the early learning sites and programmes across South Africa have been initiated by the NPO sector working alongside communities.

In order for government to step up to the challenge of addressing the developmental needs of young children, the various departments responsible for quality ECD provision in the country will need to draw on the expertise which abound in this sector. It is imperative for government to work alongside these organizations to ensure the development and implementation of an effective, integrated approach to ECD.

2.6.4 Practitioner Profile

The ECD sector is highly feminized with almost all (99%) ECD Practitioners being women with a mean age of 38 years (Williams & Samuels, 2001). A large number of Practitioners do not have qualifications recognized by government (88%) as a result of being trained by NPO’s (Porteus, 2004). However, the government has recognized the urgent need to officially recognize the training that these Practitioners have received and has introduced a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) that now offers an opportunity for those who have received their training through the NPO sector to be acknowledged and accredited for both their training and experience (Williams & Samuels, 2001).



ECD Practitioners
Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

PART I CULTURAL DIVERSITY

...diversity is a strength to work with, rather than an obstacle to overcome.
Pence and Nsamenang (2008)

The world has undergone drastic changes in recent times, becoming more fluid, mobile and diverse, where many of the traditional borders have been destroyed (Morrow, 2007). As a result of these increasing changes many communities are now made up of a hybrid mix of people from diverse cultural, religious, linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds, as is the case in South Africa. Negotiating everyday life is more often than not a challenge in such societies due to differences which affect both the public and private domains of life (Rex, 1997).

In pluricultural societies where majority and minority cultures come together, the form by which relationships are established varies according to four dominant approaches, namely *assimilation*, *segregation*, *marginalization* and *integration* (Besalú, 2002). With regards to the first variant, the aim is to achieve cultural uniformity by encouraging minorities to adopt the dominant culture and abandon their own. By doing so, they can be afforded the same rights as citizens of this (dominant) cultural community. In some instances the state may insist on the assimilation of what Gellner terms ‘entropy-resistant’ groups, for example insisting that minorities like Bretons become French; thereby ridding themselves of their insular languages and boundary markers and begin seeing themselves as French people (Eriksen, 2002). In societies where immigration is the predominant cause of diversity, it is naturally beneficial, if not essential, for immigrants to learn the local language. However, the problem with the assimilation model is that it is characterized by often inflicting suffering and loss of dignity rather than helping people to achieve equal rights and improve their social standing (Ibid). According to Besalú (2002), assimilation is the most common model of relationships between dominant and minority cultures and results in the latter having to renounce their cultural identity.

The second approach which pluricultural societies can adopt is segregation, which was perhaps best represented by apartheid South Africa. By paying scrupulous attention to cultural differences, it is argued that it is harmful to ‘mix cultures’ and is therefore predominantly concerned with boundary maintenance (Eriksen, 2002). The result is that contact is avoided, or

prohibited by law, between people from different cultural backgrounds in both the public and private domain. Rex (1997) points out that all too often the multicultural ideal is confused with the principle of a segregationist society, namely a society that allows diversity and differential rights for groups in the public domain and which also encourages or insists upon diversity of cultural practice by different groups in the private sphere. Apartheid serves as a stark warning against such a model.

Another approach which has proven to have dire consequences for society is that of marginalization, whereby people and their cultures are negated and not respected, thereby stripping them of any claim to rights (Besalú, 2002). Examples of the extremes to which marginalization can be taken include the Jewish Holocaust and the systematic extermination of the indigenous KhoiSan in South Africa, as well as the indigenous peoples of North America and Australia.

The fourth approach is that of integration, which aims at establishing cohesive and respectful societies. Besalú (2002: 32) acknowledges the value of this model when he writes that: *“Correspondería a la actitud interculturalista, que respeta las culturas minoritarias, pero a su vez promueve el contacto, el diálogo, el mestizaje y la igualdad de derechos y deberes”*. The need to create contact and encourage dialogue across cultures is important in societies where integration is heralded as the approach which can most benefit all stakeholders. According to the integration model, cultural diversity is seen as something which enriches society and which allows people to build bridges across cultural differences, which in turn increases understanding of, and respect for, people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

The importance of preserving and respecting cultural diversity is a central component of Unesco's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity 2001 which calls for the acknowledgment of otherness in all its forms, as well as the recognition on the parts of individuals about the plurality of their respective identities. According to Article 1, cultural diversity is heralded as the “the common heritage of humanity” and “as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature” (Unesco, 2000). As regards education, this Universal Declaration clearly stipulates the important role of education in promoting awareness of the positive value of cultural diversity and the need to improve curriculum design as well as teacher education to ensure intercultural dialogue and peaceful societies.

In order to fully appreciate the complexity of culturally diverse societies, a look at the interpretation of key terms, including ‘culture’ and ‘identity’ is required.

3.1 Towards a concept of culture

The concept of *culture*, in other words what it means and the appropriate usage for this term, is complex and confusing and is perhaps most closely associated to cultural anthropology, although not even anthropologists have a unanimous understanding of the concept of culture (Besalú, 2002). Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1985) investigated the various meanings of ‘culture’ and found approximately 300 different definitions of the word. It is not surprising then that White (1959), in an interesting and thorough explanation about his understanding of culture, points out the challenges brought about by this term, when he writes that:

Virtually all cultural anthropologists take it for granted, no doubt, that *culture* is the basic and central concept of their science. There is, however, a disturbing lack of agreement as to what they mean by this term.

This lack of agreement is as a result of the confusing use of the word in the nineteenth century, its association with race in the form of *Volkgeist*, and its relationship with civilization or ‘high culture’ (Friedman, 1994). From the turn of the century culture was conceptualised in a radically new way due to the relativist anthropology of Franz Boas who turned culture into something “superorganic, that is, arbitrary with respect to those who possess it...as some kind of text that had its own life and could be studied in itself without reference to the people who practiced it” (Ibid: 67). According to Essomba (2006) the more classic concept of culture is still maintained within the social sphere by some who refer to the level of knowledge that individuals possess, usually valued according to the academic degree which s/he possesses.

The need to view culture as dependant on the context in which it is being lived was recognised in the late 19th and 20th centuries by E.B Tylor who warned ethnologists to avoid “measuring other people’s corn by one’s own bushel”, while the anthropologist Malinowski stressed the need to grasp the point of view of the other, including his relation to life and vision of the world (Tylor 1881 cited in Pence and Nsamenang, 2008: 9). Edward Sapir, a renowned linguist, emphasised that “the world in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not

merely the same world with different labels attached” (Sapir 1929: 209 cited in Pence and Nsamenang, 2008: 9).

Although culture proves an ambiguous and slippery concept, the need to reflect on what we mean by culture and what its most important characteristics are in order to construct both theory and practice in a more solid and coherent manner is stressed by Besalú (2002). In this study we define the concept of culture according to Nieto (2002: 53):

The ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors (which can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class, and/or religion), and how these are transformed by those who share them.

This definition conceives of culture as *dynamic* and takes into account the many factors which together determine the culture of a group of people. Furthermore, Nieto strongly believes that culture is more than ethnicity, race and language, and that those working with the term need to take into account the critical role of, for example, gender and social class and how these dimensions influence cultural differences (Ibid). Culture should, therefore, be understood as *process* rather than just content, and as *historically and socially contextualized* instead of insulated (Ibid). Thus, with social transformations continually taking place it is clearly evident that it is almost impossible to talk about cultural homogeneity; indeed, it is argued by some that cultural homogeneity never really existed.

The above-mentioned definition of culture transcends the obvious cultural markers which are often used to identify which culture someone forms part of. Besalú (2002) uses the analogy of an iceberg when referring to this view of culture. He notes that the small, visible part of the iceberg is where one finds aspects of culture including gastronomy, folklore, festivals, housing, music, art, literature, dress and so forth. Below the surface one finds the other, more profound aspects of cultures, some of which are unconscious and include:

...nuestra manera de ser y de comportarnos: cosmología, concepto de pudor, concepto de belleza, modelos de relación, definición de locura, funciones relacionados con el rango, con el sexo, con la edad...lenguaje corporal, expresión de las emociones, valores, ideales, etc.

(Besalú, 2002: 27)

Thus far we have attempted to highlight that firstly, the concept of culture is not readily definable due to its ever-changing characteristics, secondly, that this concept is often erroneously simplified by defining culture according to the more tangible and/or visible aspects of culture, and most importantly, that the concept of culture cannot be divorced from that which is so integral to its construction, namely the values, attitudes and beliefs which people hold and which are integral to the construction of the cultural worlds in which they live.

3.2 Identity

An extract from an article aptly entitled ‘It’s Difficult to Decide my Identity’ written by a South African named Nat Nakasa (1966: 50) strikes the heart of the matter regarding identity construction, as well as the challenge presently facing people the world-over who can lay claim to a multitude of origins; who are products of diverse histories:

Who are my people? I am supposed to be a Pondo, but I don’t even know the language of that tribe. I was brought up in a Zulu-speaking home, my mother being a Zulu. Yet I can no longer think in Zulu because that language cannot cope with the demands of our day. I could not, for instance, discuss negritude in Zulu...I have never owned an assegai or any of the magnificent tribal shields...I am more at home with an Afrikaner than with a West African. I am a South African...”My people” are South Africans. Mine is the history of the Great Trek. Gandhi’s passive resistance in Johannesburg, the wars of Atewayo and the dawn raids which gave us the treason trials in 1965. All these are South African things. They are a part of me...

The title of Nakasa’s article alludes to the *constructive* aspect of identity and the stress and contradiction often caused by the existence of a plurality of identities (Castells, 2004). The construction of identities requires diverse building materials drawn from history, geography, biology, productive and reproductive institutions, collective memory, personal fantasies, power apparatuses and religious revelations (Ibid). However, Castells (2004: 7) notes that “individuals, social groups, and societies process all these materials, and rearrange their meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects that are rooted in their social structure, and in their space/time framework”.

Continuing with Castell’s notion of a *plurality of identities*, Holland et al (2001: Preface) in their work entitled ‘Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds’, write that “Identities – if they are alive, if they are being lived – are unfinished and in process... identities never arrive in persons

or in their immediate social milieu already formed”. Furthermore, Holland et al. (2001) stress that identities do not remain vibrant without considerable social work in and for the person, and that they happen in social practice. The concept of identities as ‘unfinished and in process’ clearly relates to the writing of Nakasa who, through his writing, engages in self-definition within a specific social context and set within a historical moment in time.

According to Castells (2004: 6) identity can be defined as the “process of construction of meaning in the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning”. This definition highlights that identity is a process, rather than a state, which, according to Essomba (2006), indicates its dynamic, complex psychosocial character. Identity therefore opens the doors to enrichment and discovery, and opportunities for social interaction and exchange (Ibid).

Besalú (2002) distinguishes between two main forms of identity, namely individual and collective identity. He defines individual identity to be that which makes each person unique, distinctive from other people. Individual identities consist of a multitude of elements, many of which we share with other people, however, the combination of these elements within each person is always different (Ibid). Part of our individual identity is made up of physical characteristics such as gender, while the greater part of this identity consists of elements which are constructed and which can change throughout our lives and include among others our nationality, social class, language, profession, sexual preference and so on. The *fluidity* of individual identity is particularly pertinent in this current mobile world. Furthermore, the extent to which one can construct one’s identity versus identity, at least partly, being ascribed to one is worthy of consideration. This observation is confirmed by Essomba (2006) who points out that being Pakistani in Pakistan is not the same as being Pakistani in Barcelona. In different contexts one’s identity undergoes transformation as “*El aprendizaje de una nueva lengua, la contextualización en un nuevo marco de compartimientos sociales mayoritarios afectan al proceso de construcción*” (Ibid: 52). However, it must be noted that with an increase in people from different cultural backgrounds within a community, the local inhabitants when facing this new reality can look at themselves and develop the process of identity construction in a more conscious manner (Ibid). Living in a diverse world thereby affects the process of identity construction in everyone, not just those who are new to a country, a community or a

neighbourhood. Identity is therefore both relational and situational, leading to what is known as *hybrid* identities.

Regarding the relational nature of identity, Weedon (2004) notes that “identity presupposes some degree of self-recognition on the part of the subject, often defined in relation to what one believes one is not”. Identities, therefore, have their “others” according to which they mark their difference (Ibid). In South Africa identities were centred on the creation of polarized, binary opposites such as black / white, tradition / modern, backward / progressive and superstitious / racial, which were used to justify race-based domination (Swatuk, 2005). Identity formation during the apartheid years was therefore greatly influenced by a negative understanding of difference; an understanding which gave rise to fear and disregard for the ‘other’ and his/her way of life. Informal and personal contact between people are part of the ‘social practice’ that are necessary for the construction of identities. However, the restrictions placed on, for example, eating out together and getting permission to visit townships ruthlessly limited interaction in South African society (UNESCO, 1972). It is not surprising that as a consequence an atmosphere of mistrust between people can still be found, with beliefs of superiority and inferiority still deeply entrenched. Meaningful relationships across different cultural groups therefore continue to be difficult to establish.

Collective identities is defined by Besalú (2002: 32) as “*la que se atribuye a un grupo sobre la base de características comunes sobresalientes; es el sentimiento de pertenencia a un colectivo*”. When apartheid ended the new leaders of South Africa had an enormous challenge ahead of them: unifying the previously divided ‘racial’ groups in the hope of achieving a vibrant pluricultural society. One of the main strategies used to achieve this objective was through building a national identity with which it was hoped all South Africans could identify. The term ‘rainbow nation’ was adopted to positively emphasise the diversity among the people of the ‘new’ South Africa, while a new national anthem (which has verses in four official languages), a new flag, monuments and rituals were adopted to “promote narratives of identity and belonging” (Weedon, 2004: 20). These narratives serve to construct what the anthropologist Benedict Anderson (1991) has termed and ‘imagined community’, in other words, a *nation*.

Although an effort has been made to get the people of South Africa to feel a sense of unity across barriers of race, language, religion etc., much still remains to be done to ensure the formation of new identities as people from diverse backgrounds come into contact in the social

sphere and thereby learn to interpret the world in new ways. After apartheid was abolished everyone in South Africa had to engage in reconceptualising who they were and what their place was in the new dispensation. Holland et al. (1998: 73) write that “individuals do this through participating in group activities, learning to produce and enact cultural forms particular to that world, and taking up these forms as devices for mediating their own conception of self and the world”. However, spaces for participation have to be created across both individual and collective differences for this to be achieved.

3.3 Multiculturalism and Interculturalism

Both multiculturalism and interculturalism have played an important role in informing mainstream discourse on education in many societies. Alongside multiculturalism and interculturalism, other social models have been developed to manage cultural diversity such as the melting-pot approach and cultural pluralism (Essomba, 2006). However, for the purposes of this study the main focus will be on multiculturalism and interculturalism.

In an attempt to better understand what he terms “the fuzziness of the ideal of multiculturalism”, Rex (1997: 207), looks to theories developed by anthropologists and sociologists in studying pluricultural societies. He recognises that one of the greatest challenges within a pluricultural society is ensuring that multiculturalism is compatible with *equality of opportunity* and not necessarily equality per se. This is essentially due to the fact that equality should not inhibit people from ‘the right to be different’. Rex terms this the ‘Multicultural Dilemma’, in other words, the right to equality as well as difference and states that essentially all minority cultures should enjoy equal respect. However, this idea has been seized by some who believe that minorities should receive something different and inferior, which is the very reverse of equality. Soudien (2006) notes that apartheid, ironically, was a form of multiculturalism, which is exactly the danger that Rex (1997) is alluding to when he notes that one form of multiculturalism can translate into a society which allows diversity and differential rights for groups in the public domain, and which also encourages or insists upon diversity of cultural practice by different groups in the private sphere.

The concept of interculturalism was born in France in 1975, within a framework of social and educational projects (Essomba, 2006), and is the term preferred by European and

Mediterranean countries including France, Germany, Italy and Spain (Besalú, 2002). Although the term *multiculturalism* continues to be used in various Anglo-Saxon countries, in the European countries mentioned above, this term has been reduced to have a purely descriptive meaning, in other words, to refer to a society where diverse cultures coexist. The term *interculturalism* has instead come to have a much more profound meaning, in that it refers to a specific type of relationship between cultures which coexist in the same society.

According to Carbonell (1998), interculturalism consists of three major principles:

- 1.) Equality of opportunities for all persons when sharing the same space and time, and living together in this space and time.
- 2.) Respect for diversity
- 3.) Creation of social spheres which facilitate exchange and the mutual enrichment of subjects who have distinct ethnic or cultural origins.

As specified by Essomba (2006), as opposed to other models, interculturalism advocates for the facilitation of spaces for exchange, enrichment and comprehension. Interculturalism is therefore *un proyecto de realización, y no de un descriptor de una realidad acabada y analizable* (Ibid: 44). Communication is a key feature in facilitating comprehension between culturally diverse groups, and is one of the factors that distinguishes interculturalism from both multiculturalism and assimilation. As noted by Ruiz de Lobera (2004: 96), “*Es en este punto [comunicación] donde la interculturalidad ofrece un planeamiento mas completo y persuasivo, además de realista*”. The combination of recognition of difference and intercultural communication provides the conditions in order to define the criteria, objectives and communal values which are imperative in order to prevent the destruction of social cohesion (Ibid). As Young (cited en Ruiz de Lobera, 2004) points out, perhaps there is no issue more important in the social sciences than the study of intercultural communication. Understanding between members from differing cultural backgrounds has always been important, such as for the empires and commerce, but never such as now, because today it is a matter of the survival of the human species.

Intercultural relations already exist in many instances; however, the aim of Interculturalism is to promote increased contact and mutual exchanges between diverse cultural groups in order to promote social cohesion. Combining recognition of difference and intercultural communication gives rise to conditions which help define the criteria, objectives and common values required for social transformation (Ibid). Diez estrada (1998: 19 cited in Ruiz de Lobera,

2004) notes the impact that intercultural relations can have on one's identity, in that *“El encuentro con el desconocido, con el extranjero, no solo nos permite captar lo específico de nuestra identidad, por contraste y comunicación, sino que nos capacita para tomar distancia selectiva de ella, es decir, para crecer...Al comunicarnos con el otro percibimos nuestra propia identidad”*. This ties in with the concept of identity as being something undergoing constant change and evolution. A key aspect of this change and evolution is, however, the interpersonal contact that one experiences, which stimulates the aforementioned transformation. In order to facilitate intercultural exchanges, spaces need to be found. The objectives of intercultural education include the creation of spaces which provide the necessary conditions to produce intercultural relations (Ibid).

3.3.1 Intercultural Education

Intercultural education has peaked the interest of researchers from different disciplines, including education, politics, anthropology and sociology, and has resulted in a number of publications with a descriptive, explicative or explorative character (Poblete Melis, 2006). In this study, intercultural education is defined as *la aproximación a la educación que considera la diversidad cultural, que potencia el intercambio entre los diferentes sujetos culturales y que garantiza a la vez, el bagaje y atributos culturales propios, potenciando asimismo las semejanzas y no las diferencias. Se desarrolla desde una perspectiva global que implica a todas las partes implicadas: escuela, alumnos, familias (dimensión social, económica y cultural) y entorno inmediato* (Gairín et al. 2007).

Intercultural education addresses the challenges that face education systems, which includes amongst others, processes of integration, social inclusion and exclusion, promoting respect for diversity, and the prevention of racist, xenophobic and discriminatory attitudes and actions on the part of students, educators, families and the general community.

It is important to clarify here that interculturalism does not inform only one aspect of education. Coulby (2006) states that interculturalism should not be treated as a subject that can be provided a slot on the timetable alongside all the other subjects, nor is it appropriate to one phase of education alone. According to Coulby (2006), intercultural education is the major theme which needs to inform the teaching and learning of all subjects and is just as vital at university as it is in

the preschool years. Reforming education in the face of increasing diversity should, in theory as well as practice, guarantee the representation of values and attitudes, as well as the implementation of knowledge and strategies, that fit with the model of intercultural education.

Therefore, intercultural education is not only about identifying best practice and implementing this in different educational contexts. Essentially, it refers to the reconceptualisation of the purpose of educational centres, critically assessing what their purpose has been in the past and what they are capable of achieving in the present in order to prepare students for life in a great variety of contexts. In many communities, if not all, there is a real need to oppose exclusionary practices, and to inculcate values such as respect for diversity, social inclusion and *convivencia*. Through the promotion of such values, communities can move towards surmounting, for example, discriminatory practices and social marginalization. Coulby (2006: 252) outlines the limitations of intercultural education, noting however, the necessity of the attempt to overcome barriers which arise between differing cultures:

It is the boldness of the aspiration to understand more than one culture and how they mutually inter-relate, [sic], that might characterize intercultural education at all levels. Certainly, this will involve recognition of the difficulty, even impossibility, of the enterprise, but it will also assert the necessity of the attempt, if gateways are to be made through the barriers of language and distance.

In South Africa it is imperative that intercultural education becomes the central pillar around which debates about educational reform post-apartheid are coordinated.

PART II EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

Taking into account that social and educational models such as those addressed in the above section are largely political in character in the sense that they respond to how States manage diversity, it is necessary to look at what South African educational policies specify regarding the managing of cultural diversity and ensuring fundamental change and transformation in the education sector.

In the past South Africa clearly adopted a segregationist model within both society and the education system. Post-1994 the transformation of the education system followed the first democratic elections held in the country, with the commitment to overhaul the segregationist policies and practices and do away with any form of discrimination. This commitment is apparent in the in the South African Schools Act of 1996, which stipulates that the

...achievement of democracy in South Africa has consigned to history the past system of education which was based on racial inequality and segregation; and [that] this country requires a new national system for schools which will redress past injustices in educational provision, provide an education of progressively high quality for all learners and in so doing lay a strong foundation for the development of all our people's talents and capabilities, advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, contribute to the eradication of poverty and the economic well-being of society, protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages, uphold the rights of all learners, parents and educators, and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organisation, governance and funding of schools in partnership with the State...

(South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996)

Moodley and Adam (2004) note that in South Africa the challenges of educating citizens in a pluricultural society differs from those in the United States of America, where the concerns centre around integrating minorities and immigrants into the mainstream, and Europe. In post-apartheid South Africa a formerly disenfranchised majority of colour has acquired political power, while economic leverage, namely capital and skills, remains largely in the hands of white people (Ibid). The authors go on to say that “Nonetheless, a sense of displacement, of being

squatters in a foreign continent, and existing on sufferance rather than enjoying equal rights has penetrated the subconscious of many members of minority groups” (Ibid: 160). It is therefore important to investigate the social function of education within a society, and especially to accept that education today is faced by challenges, some of them very different to those faced by the education system in the past. One of these challenges is the need to educate people to live in a diverse world, and find new solutions to new challenges (Besalú, 2002).

The challenges facing education include what Besalú (2002) calls the “triple rupture” of critical post-modernity, namely the epistemological, cultural and personal ruptures. These ruptures have had a profound effect on pedagogical practices, leaving educational institutions in a situation of dejection and perplexity as a result of the break down of the fundamental principles on which the education system was based, namely, to “*Atender sobre todo las cabezas, ignorando lo demás; transmitir la cultura verdadera y combatir las discrepancias; y guiarse por el saber legitimado por la comunidad científica*” (Ibid: 35). This outdated and unsatisfactory aim of education needs to give way to a new educational project; one which accepts diversity and aims to educate and decisively contribute towards assisting each and every individual to constructing healthy and desirable personal, as well as social, identities. Education systems faced with diversity among, for example, students, families, educators, and management, will inevitably encounter tensions in the system, as different values, attitudes and customs are confronted by the varying role. It is therefore imperative that people are open to engage with one another, to listen, to enter into dialogue, and to negotiate the reality of which they are all co-constructors.

3.4 Educational reform in South Africa: From apartheid to democracy

The apartheid government believed that the education system played a vital role in establishing and maintaining the separation of racial communities in the country, as well as ensuring that each racial community understood its place in society (Unesco 1972: 28). As a result the government implemented oppressive educational policies which meant that many people were denied access to education or alternatively found themselves receiving poor quality education with the ‘place’ of the school-educated Black in the South African society severely

restricted (Mayer, 1980). 'Native education' during this time can be summed up by the following statement:

The education of the white child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the education of a black child for a subordinate society. There are for the white child no limits, in or out of school. For the Black child there are limits...They form part of the whole social and economic structure of the country, and it serves no purpose to act as if they did not exist".

(Prof. Edgar Brookes cited in Mayer, 1980: 24)

The Bantu Education Act of 1963 was shortly followed by comparable legislation which ensured separate Coloured and Indian schools respectively. In 1967 the National Education Policy Act laid the foundation for Christian National Education (CNE), which had its roots in the separate schools established by Afrikaners at the beginning of the nineteenth century in order to inculcate their own brand of Calvinism and Boer identity (Gallagher, 2004). When it was once again revived it was defined by the Minister of Education in 1971 as "the active promotion of a sense of nationalism and patriotism among pupils" (Ibid: 109). Both of these –isms were achieved through the curriculum as well as through school rituals and festivals.

Following the segregationist principles upon which apartheid was based, schooling was provided separately to the four major racial groups: Black Africans, whites, Asians and Coloureds and each governed by a separate state department (Mentz & van der Walt, 2007). By 1983 seventeen different departments of education had been created (Ibid). In order to further inculcate the inequality present in the education system, the material and resources invested into schools differed according to racial groups. Black African schools were severely under-resourced and understaffed as the "intention always had been that education would limit rather than realize their potential" (Gallagher, 2004: 109). The following figure shows the expenditure on education in 1970 in South Africa according to the different population groups (Ibid: 108).

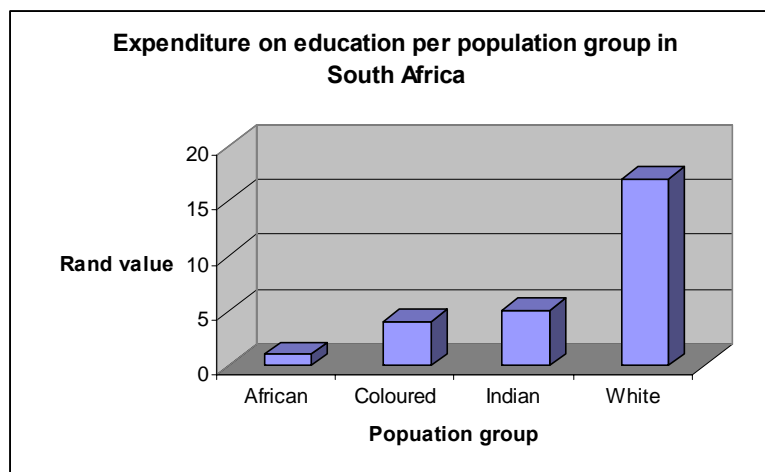


Figure 3: The expenditure on education per population group in South Africa in 1970. Source: Gallagher, 2004.

Furthermore, Black Africans were taxed in order to finance extensions in African education, thereby placing the burden of improving educational quality on those who could not afford it (Unesco, 1972). In white schools, the teacher-student ratio was 1:20, while in African schools this figure rose to 1:58. Due to high rates of illiteracy and school dropouts, by 1988 almost one third of teachers in African schools had not received a secondary school qualification (Gallagher 2004). The present day inequality between schools as regards basic infrastructure, learning materials and qualified teachers undeniably has its roots in the apartheid education system.

The implementation of state policy, which had as its aim to change the language of instruction in schools to Afrikaans, resulted in fierce opposition from those whose human rights had been continually violated over a long period of time. On the 16th of June 1976 the students took to the streets of Soweto, a township located on the outskirts of Johannesburg, to protest against the decree and found themselves confronted with tear gas and bullets released by the security forces. According to the government at the time 95 students were killed during this uprising, however, unofficial statistics put this figure closer to 500. The Soweto Student Uprising was to mark the beginning of a change in the consciousness of the people, especially regarding the oppressed Black African communities, resulting in a strike in 1980 among African pupils in all Cape schools. The government responded to the increasing unrest by undertaking an in-depth study into education, known as the De Lange Commission. Although the government responded to some of the Commission's recommendations, the suggestion to establish a single Education Department to cover all schools was rejected. Instead, it chose to maintain institutional pluralism and thereby maintain the separate education departments (Ibid). However,

despite the desperate attempts to restructure the political arrangements while keeping with the ideology of apartheid, the system had begun its downfall. By 1984 a state of emergency was declared as the violence in townships began to escalate and not long after this in 1985 the State President began talks with gaoled ANC leader, Nelson Mandela. It was not until 1989 when F.W De Klerk was elected State President that real change began to take place, which included the release of key ANC leaders from jail such as Nelson Mandela in 1990 (Ibid).

By 1991 talks began between various political parties at the first Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA I). However, things did not move along smoothly and when the second round of talks (CODESA II) collapsed in 1992 it would take two mass killings which discredited extremists on both sides of the political spectrum to restore a sense of urgency to the process of democratizing South Africa. After final negotiations in 1994 the first official democratic elections were held. A key figure in the relatively smooth transition from apartheid to democracy was Nelson Mandela. In 1994, after spending 27 years in jail for the crime of being a political activist fighting against the apartheid regime, he was inaugurated as the first democratically elected President of South Africa.

The education system during this time of political and social change also underwent reformation. From 1990 all schools were legally able to 'render services' to other racial groups, however, only a few former white schools chose to do so and thereby become desegregated. In the following years schools were required to adopt an 'open' admissions policy, but as Christie (1995) points out, only a limited number of Black Africans were able to access these schools. Furthermore, few had attempted to develop diversity within their curriculum (Gallagher, 2004). The democratic government was faced with many challenges in its attempt to address the severe inequalities within the education system which had been inherited from the apartheid regime. The government's strategy of teacher redeployment was unpopular among teachers and proved to be much more costly than originally specified, which resulted in limited success of the programme. Furthermore, schools were given the go ahead to charge school fees which acted, and continue to act, as a brake on integration.

One of the fundamental changes to the education system post-1994 was the redefinition of the purpose of education within the South African society. Having seen what the education system during apartheid had been designed to achieve, an overhaul of the entire system was needed. Although changes have occurred, the millennial edition of the South Africa Survey

(Foley et al. 1999) found that the goal of achieving integrated education was not being effectively met as only 28 per cent of all schools could be defined as multiracial. There was also a marked increase in the number of independent schools being opened. Khosa (2000) notes that since 1994 South Africa has been experiencing a “black flight” from township schools to former white, Coloured and Asian schools due to the perceived higher quality of education on offer at these institutions. Educators, previously accustomed to working in culturally homogenous classrooms have since then been confronted with students coming from different racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Mentz & van der Walt, 2007).

3.5 Achieving integration in the education system

Integration is a process which, according to Carbonell (1998) is slowly realized from ‘both sides’ (majority/minority, immigrant/host etc.) that are actively and unequivocally committed to resolving the inevitable conflicts which come about as a result of a variety of values and customs, and especially social and political inequality. The aim of integration is to essentially create, together, a new space which is not yet in existence, governed by new rules which have been negotiated and borne from shared creativity. This leads us back to what Rex (1997) pointed out about the need to create *equality of opportunity*, not forgetting that although questions raised in pluricultural societies are global ones, they are nevertheless framed and expressed in uniquely local ways (Eriksen, 2002).

Soudien (2004) makes the broad argument that “the notion of ‘integration’ depends on how the concept of difference is defined”. Working in the South African context where the dominant approach to difference is race, he shows that the outcome of integration within the education system has been *assimilation*, with a huge amount of students moving away from what is termed former black schools, but with no return flow. There is also a strong movement of formerly disenfranchised people to the English-speaking sector of the former white school system (Ibid). As the social nature of education within the country has clearly undergone changes, the middle-class has managed to consolidate its position, while working-class and poor people continue to experience vulnerability and discrimination (Ibid). The education system has therefore moved from one extreme to another, from segregation to assimilation. The real challenge now lies in trying to achieve *integration*.

Difference has been conceptualised in various ways in South Africa, many of which have proven to be problematic. Prioritising race as a category of analysis, writes Soudien (2004), undermines the range of factors and process which together influence cohesiveness and fragmentation within groups. He thus introduces the notion of ‘scapes’, or ‘ways of seeing’, of framing the objects that come into view in particular kinds of ways. By approaching difference in this way, in other words through scapes, Soudien attempts to move beyond the more stereotypical way that difference is understood and look at how these scapes can together allow for a more integrated analysis.

These *scapes* provide new spaces in which to analytically look at the complex notion of integration within the South African education system. Although there are many *scapes* including the more obvious race, class and gender scapes, there are also cultural scapes, language scapes, nationality scapes, health scapes and many more which have not been sufficiently developed as yet (Ibid). Through the use of race and class scapes, as these are the most dominant and better-constructed scapes, Soudien (2004: 110) argues that “there exist multiple ways in which society experiences difference, but that within these, certain ways are privileged”. What is important to note here is that different forms of oppression are interconnected and assist in the construction of one another and may even be contradictory in certain instances. This being said, the ugly scars of racism still mar relations in the South African society, and need to be seriously addressed.

3.5.1 Race and Racism

There is the clear prospect that racial conflict, if we cannot curb and finally eliminate it, will grow into a destructive monster compared to which the religious or ideological conflicts of the past and present will seem like small family quarrels... This, for the sake of all our children, whatever their race and colour, must not be permitted to happen.

Unesco (1972: 256)

The stark warning above was evidently not headed in time and although apartheid came to an official end in 1994, race and racism has been, and remains, an inseparable part of the structure of South African society (Dubow, 1995). The latest spite of xenophobic attacks whereby immigrants from other African states were mercilessly chased out of the communities in

which they were living, beaten and sometimes killed, has proved that much still remains to be attained in a society which has far from freed itself from the shackles of racism and prejudice. These newer forms of racist expression need to be guarded against.

Writing about the role of racism in South Africa, Dubow (1995:7) identifies what he terms ‘popular racism’ and points out the danger of this as it “exists as a matter of unstated assumptions and unthinking responses; it often has more to do with the *absence* than the *presence* of considered thought, and is therefore particularly intractable to deal with” (Ibid: 7). Racism is costly for all. Although the cost is higher for the oppressed and those discriminated against, Tatum (1997: 14 cited in Akom, 2008) notes that the oppressors too pay a high price, namely that of “fear, alienation, moral trepidation, loss of relationships and constricted perception”. Due to the engineering of South African society along separatist lines, the formation of personal relationships across racial lines has been seriously diminished. In the field of culture, ‘separate development’ reduced all contact between whites and those labelled ‘non-whites’ to a minimum, thereby ensuring cultural apartness instead of cultural interaction (Unesco, 1972). The effect of this limitation on the creative possibilities of all South Africans continues to present itself today.

While in 1903 the American scholar W. E. B. Du Bois asserted that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line”, the British scholar Stuart Hall (1993: 361) identified that “the capacity to *live with difference* is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century”. His assertion comes from the fact that in contemporary societies there is increasing diversity in subject positions, social experiences, and cultural identities which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore are constantly evolving and changing (Back & Solomos, 2000).

As regards ‘race relations’ in South Africa, cultural differences were parallel to racial differences and with the end of apartheid social and cultural identities were also required to undergo transformation. In contemporary racist discourse, race is often coded in terms of ‘difference’ and ‘culture’ (Ibid: 20). Important studies on race, culture and identity have been published in more recent years, giving rise, particularly in the United States and Britain, to debates around the complex forms of racialised identities in colonial and postcolonial societies (Ibid). Legislating against apartheid is clearly not sufficient to counter racism within the South African society. It is imperative to see what kinds of racialised identities are being formed within this context, which have been deeply influenced by particular cultural and historical processes.

One of these processes includes colonialism which, according to critical research on the politics of colonialism, has shown that images of the ‘other’ played a central role within colonial discourse (Ibid). Back and Solomos (2000: 13) go on to say that “Such images were closely tied to racial stereotypes, but it was also clear that they related to all aspects of the relationship between the colonised and the colonisers”. Drawing on an unambiguous summary of Levinas’ conception of one’s encounter with the ‘Other’, Wild (in Cook & Young, 2004) writes that:

Of course, I may simply treat [the Other] as a different version of myself, or, if I have the power, place him under my categories and use him for my purposes. But this means reducing him to what he is not. How can I coexist with him and still leave his otherness intact?”

Wild’s question echoes Hall’s observation quoted earlier regarding the challenge of the twenty first century, namely developing the “capacity to *live with difference*”. A key factor is the establishing of relationships between people which is not based on racial ideas and values, but rather on values which foster respect for diversity and acceptance of the ‘other’. Writing about South African society post-1994, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (1995 cited in Segal, 1997) states that:

In a time of transition such as ours, people are insecure and uncertain because well-known landmarks have shifted or are shifting, and they look for security in sameness and homogeneity. They are scared of difference which heightens their anxiety, and so we see an aversion to diversity, be it of opinion or ethnicity or whatever.

3.6 The current educational plan vis-à-vis cultural diversity

The South African School Act of 1996 makes a clear commitment to establishing a quality education system which fosters respect for cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. These commitments are echoed in both the Founding Provisions and the Bill of Rights of the South African Constitution (No. 108 of 1996), which clearly stipulates that the new democratic society must be both open and equitable, thereby ensuring that the fundamental rights of all human beings are met.

Writing about de-racialisation and integration within the South African education system post-1994, Khosa (2000) acknowledges that policy alone is not sufficient to deal with matters

regarding integration and that individual teachers, students, and parents will need to commit themselves to welcoming as well as celebrating diversity. Of particular importance is the need to challenge and address prejudices and stereotypes held by those working in the education system who, prior to 1994, were subject to apartheid education policy which aimed at brain-washing all races to believe that everything about 'non-whites' was both barbaric and inferior (Ibid). The need for the current educational plan to build understanding and acceptance of the 'other' is of vital importance.

On the macro level, one of the greatest challenges regarding integration is that the National Department of Education has not foreseen the need to develop programmes which provide guidelines as to how to work effectively within a culturally diverse setting. According to Khosa (2000), this is due to the fact that the School's Act of 1996, along with the Constitution, protect against unfair discrimination within the education system, meaning that the department of education see no need to implement any policy which deals specifically with de-racialisation or integration. The department's response to incidents of racism and prejudice can best be described as ad hoc. For example, in one province the education MEC intervened on behalf of a Grade 1 boy who was HIV positive when other parents insisted that this boy be removed from the school (Ibid). Following this incident, the department drew up a policy stating that children with HIV/AIDS have a right to education (Mail and Guardian, 1998 cited in Khosa, 2000).

On other levels many challenges to achieving integration amongst previously divided populations exist. One of the biggest challenges is the lack of an institutional policy, with a recent survey indicating that most schools in the country do not have a policy on racial integration. Khosa (2000: 2) outlines the implications of the lack of such a policy:

- Schools react or respond to issues on an ad hoc basis or when a crisis arises
- Teachers and learners are not prepared to deal with children of different races and cultures
- Acts of stereotypes, prejudices, racism, or segregation are likely to go unpunished as there is no clear guideline about acceptable and unacceptable racial tendencies
- Black children are not provided with coping strategies in a new or foreign environment
- Teachers use their discretion in dealing with de-racialisation and desegregation.

While implementing policy at national, provincial and local level can address some of the challenges facing integration in the education system, Venter (1998) believes that policy changes will not necessarily cause a paradigm shift towards a more humane co-existence of a diverse population. She suggests, therefore, that education today should include the experience, needs and hopes of a broad spectrum of people. Mkabela and Luthuli (1997 cited in Venter, 1998) reiterate that teacher education curriculum should include a course to prepare teachers to deal with diversity, in other words, to train and equip teachers with the necessary skills, attitudes and behaviour which will allow them to be comfortable to learn and teach in a culturally diverse setting.

3.6.1 Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy

The Manifesto on values, education and democracy released by the National Department of Education in 2001, is a product of the Values in Education Initiative, and serves as a call to all to embrace the spirit of a democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa. This report specifies ten fundamental values which are relevant to education within the country. These values are: Democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, ubuntu (human dignity), an open society, accountability, rule of law, respect, and reconciliation (Department of Education, 2001). Recognising that values cannot be legislated, this manifesto calls for the use of educational strategies to ensure that these values are promoted.

One of the foundations upon which these values are based is that “building consensus and understanding difference through dialogue is at the heart of nurturing a culture of communication and participation in schools” (Ibid: 4). However, there is more beyond dialogue that is needed, and that is the creation of spaces which allow for safe expression, which facilitates dialogue between families, educators, learners as well as department officials (Ibid).

The overall aim of the manifesto is to provide a practical framework for instilling and reinforcing the culture of communication and participation, which have been identified as critical steps in nurturing a sense of the democratic values of the Constitution in young South Africans (Ibid). Furthermore, this manifesto highlights sixteen strategies for instilling democratic values in South Africans in the learning environment. This is of particular importance in a context such as South Africa, where people strive for unity of purpose, to create bonds where before there were fractures, and to ease the tension of past conflicts. Although the manifesto calls for the ‘teaching’

of the values outlined in this document, it is acknowledged that the aim is *not* to “drum a series of values into children’s heads” which was the style of Christian National Education in the apartheid years; to legislate a value system and turn it into an ideology (Ibid: 9). Rather, the aim is to generate debate about these values, so that these values can be negotiated, modified and synthesised, and which can provide strategies aimed at, inter alia, ensuring equal access to education, promoting multilingualism and fostering respect for diversity and difference.

PART III EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

3.7 The social and educational function of early childhood development centres

Early childhood development is much more than simply early education and cognitive orientation. The use of the term ‘education’ in the early childhood years is very broad, and includes learning through a range of developmental activities and opportunities (Unesco, 2006). ECD necessarily involves a comprehensive network of support to the child, the family and the community to meet the basic needs of that community. It is when communities realise that they have the right and capacity to determine the programme options which would best meet the needs of the children in that community, that true development takes place. The most powerful initiatives for change come from within the communities, joined together around the often limited resources that they have, forming a nucleus of activity for development. Early childhood development serves as a means through which families can discover and enhance their capacity to contribute to the education and care of their children.

It is the aim of quality ECD programmes to ensure that children grow up healthy, well-nourished, and protected from harm, along with a sense of self-worth and identity, enthusiasm and opportunities for learning (Arnold, 2004). This holistic view of children’s well-being is increasingly being accepted by many agencies and governments around the world, and ECD services have an important part to play in developing children’s potential. In South Africa ECD is defined as “an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally, and socially” (Department of Education, 2001a). It is therefore understood that ECD has a vital role to play in preparing children for further learning as well as through developing their social and affective behaviours. It is during this time that children receive emotional support, develop their sense of personal and physical security and strengthen bonds with their family and community (Porteus, 2004).

Quality early childhood services are one means of reducing extreme poverty and simultaneously ensuring that young children are nurtured and that their rights are met. By ensuring that the experiences that young children have in the first years of life support their healthy development in all aspects, the foundation for subsequent learning can be set. The Unesco report (2006: 12) recognises that “Although early childhood is a period of great potential

for human growth and development, it is also a time when children are especially fragile and vulnerable”. There is a growing recognition that early access to quality ECD services has a particularly important role to play in the lives of young children from low-income groups (OECD, 2006). Understanding the social and economic context in which ECD services are offered is therefore imperative to ensure that these services meet the needs of that society.

Intervention in the early years, especially for children living in extreme poverty, is imperative. It is much more problematic and costly to compensate for educational and social disadvantage among older children and adults than it is to provide preventative measures and support in early childhood (Unesco, 2006). A study entitled The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study, carried out over a twenty-seven year period, found that adults at age 40 who had attended quality early childhood development programmes had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than adults who did not have access to such programmes (Schweinhart et al., 2005). It is therefore not difficult to see that early childhood serves as an important stage in which children need to be stimulated intellectually, socially as well as emotionally, through thoughtful practitioners, families and the wider community.

3.8 Young children and diversity

The formation of prejudice starts very early in life and begins with noticing differences, identifying and classifying attributes, and thereafter developing attitudes and preferences (L. Biersteker & Pillay, Date not specified). According to Derman-Sparks (1989), children are aware from a very young age that differences in skin colour, language, gender and physical ability are connected with privilege and power. Studies undertaken have shown that children between four and five years show awareness of ethnicity (Aboud, 1988), while another study indicates that from the age of two years children commented on people with disabilities, gender differences, and physical and cultural differences (L. Derman-Sparks, Higa, & Sparks, 1980). According to Katz (1982) stereotypes, prejudices and discriminatory practices in society negatively influence the construction of gender and racial identity, as well as physical self-concept, and observed this in children as young as two years.

In stratified societies prejudice in children appears to be more pronounced (Aboud, 1988). This observation is supported by Ramsey (1995) who states research evidence indicating that the role of 'race' in children's perceptions of themselves is partly dependant on their majority or minority status within their local community as well as the extent and quality of their interaction with different racial groups. The impact of racism on children's identity development can be very harmful and have lasting impact. Most of the research mentioned here is, however, taken from countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where education against prejudice and oppression is better established (Biersteker & Pillay, Date not specified). However, trends found in the limited number of studies carried out in the South African context since the mid-1960s show remarkable similarities to international trends with racial awareness increasingly rapidly from age three (Richter, Foster, & Sherr, 2006). There is a lacuna of more recent research indicating the impact of transition to democracy on interracial orientations, however, the damaging effects of racist practices on cognitive development, self-esteem and moral development are known (Ibid).

Early childhood development centres can unintentionally promote bias in numerous ways such as through the materials used in the centre, tokenism and by valuing one group more than others (Ibid). Some of the ways in which Practitioners can promote bias include:

- Making assumptions about what is common to children and families, implying that there is one right way to live, behave and think
- Avoid answering children's questions about diversity or respond uncomfortably suggesting that there is something wrong with observing differences
- Use language that excludes certain groups

(Glover, 1995 cited in Biersteker & Pillay, date not specified)

Practitioners therefore play an important role in children's attitudinal development, although it is understood that it is also the responsibility of the centre as well as the wider education system to commit themselves to transforming perspectives and practices if prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory beliefs and behaviour are to be overcome.

3.9 Early childhood Practitioners and Families

With the increase in cultural diversity within society and the education system, educators need to be prepared to strive for the removal of discrimination and prejudice as well as inculcate respect and appreciation for diversity (Mentz & van der Walt, 2007). It is therefore safe to say that Practitioners are facing new demands as they learn and teach within a diverse environment. However, Practitioners are not being adequately trained and prepared to meet these challenges, with little or no training on the legal framework which protects all citizens (such as the Constitution and the Bill of Rights), and very few learning materials which are sensitive to cultural, religious and linguistic diversity (Ibid). According to a study undertaken by Swanepoel and Booyse (2003 cited in Mentz & van der Walt, 2007), educators admitted to being unable to adapt teaching methods to accommodate different cultures, and had received no training on how to deal with multiculturalism and multilingualism in the classroom. There is clearly and urgent need for educators to receive training in order to prepare them to deal with diversity and to ensure that such training is included in the curriculum for teacher education (Venter, 1998). Similarly, educators who have already completed their training should receive in-service training.

Some of the challenges that Practitioners face include their limited understanding of the development of prejudice in early childhood. York (1991) notes that even in communities which are predominantly homogenous diversity education plays an important role. However, providing Practitioners with information is not sufficient. Practitioners need to examine “the filters through which they view critical diversity issues... [and] take deliberate steps to prevent any perspective from harming a child” (Teaching Tolerance Project, 1997). Training should also include a component which encourages Practitioners to reflect on how the world beyond the classroom doors perpetuates a hierarchy of both physical and social traits (Biersteker & Pillay, Date not specified). Families are also a key aspect of any intervention within the early childhood development setting.

Roca Casas (2007) makes two important points regarding Practitioners and intercultural education. The first is that the role of Practitioners in an educational project is critical to its success, and secondly, that they have to be actively involved in the project. The role played by Practitioners in relation to intercultural education depends on deeply entrenched attitudes and values and has clear emotional implications (Ibid). ECD Practitioners are therefore tasked with the responsibility of understanding and accepting the diversity of the children’s identities and

provide experiences which support the development of respect for the world in which we live and the people with whom we coexist. To achieve this objective, Practitioners need an understanding of intercultural education that goes beyond the curriculum framework in which they work. Providing intervention in early childhood together with the ability of the Practitioner to promote intercultural education contributes significantly to resolving racial and ethnic tensions, as well as the creation of more integrated and socially cohesive societies (Moreno & van Dongen, 2007). However, families also play a vital role in instilling in children empathetic understanding, positive self identities and respect for diversity.

It is essential to include families in programmes for early childhood development as part of achieving social integration. Without an active dialogue between children, families and Practitioners, any intervention is unlikely to be successful.

In this study, it is imperative that families express their values and attitudes about educational practices in early childhood centres where their children attend. What families believe to be desirable regarding the learning experiences of their children reflects the values that govern their lives and has a direct impact on how this can influence the construction of children's identities.

3.10 Diversity in early childhood development centres: five broad schools of thought

In 2006 Glenda Mac Naughton undertook a large-scale literature review in order to provide an international overview as to the ways that young children's respect for diversity has been conceptualized. Through this work she has identified five main schools of thought on issues of respect for diversity in the education of young children, which include: the laissez-faire school, the special provisions school, the cultural understandings school, the equal opportunities school and the anti-discrimination school (Mac Naughton, November 2006).

3.10.1 Laissez-faire

Each school of thought has different implications for practice in early childhood. The laissez-faire approach is assimilationist in nature and follows the principle that "when we are the same, we are equal" (Ibid: 29). A key supposition of this approach is therefore that since equal

treatment of all children will produce equity and respect, Practitioners can ignore social, cultural, racial, talent and gender differences among children, families as well as other adults (Ibid). The consequences of such an approach include the application of conformist learning materials and aesthetics, as well as conformist programming and stereotyped expectations whereby educators expect all children to find themselves in mainstream, dominant values, such as behaviour that follows group norms and routines (Ibid). This approach is largely based on the idea of child as “universally innocent, developmentally immature and ignorant of diversity” (Ibid: 30) and has been heavily criticized for being paternalistic, to manage diversity for the benefit of the dominant group and to promote a culture of silence towards issues of diversity.

3.10.2 Special provisions

The second school of thought is known as the special provisions school and is based on the idea that children are deficient, deprived, disadvantaged and ‘at risk’. To rectify this early childhood programmes and teaching strategies attempt to ‘normalise’ children’s differences which include differences in gender, culture, language, abilities, class or sexuality (Ibid). This approach therefore leads to the normalizing of learning materials and aesthetics and the programme content and expectations are geared towards responding to the question ‘Is this child in any way deficient in behaviour or knowledge because s/he is different?’ (Ibid: 33). The image of the child as deficient is linked to the dominance of Western perspectives in early childhood and Mac Naughton (2006) notes that less than 10 percent of the studies on child development published in major specialist journals deal with children with culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. It stands to reason therefore that conceptions of the ‘normal’ child are based on studies of white, middle-class children and that non-white, non-middle-class children are unable to conform to these conceptions (Ibid). An inability to conform often means that children are placed in ‘early intervention programmes’ to address their supposed developmental delays. Furthermore, the idea of ‘developmentally appropriate’ practice are based on ‘truths’ which have been derived from an very limited understanding of who children are, can and should be, which in turn greatly affects the implementation of early childhood programmes and practices (Ibid).

This approach has been criticized for being segregationist as it often requires the separation of these ‘deficient’ children from the ‘normal’ setting in order for these deficiencies to

be addressed. This can in turn lead to children feeling rejected and less valued than other children, while it can affect the critical reflection of adults as to why some children might not be performing in a certain manner (Ibid). Furthermore, early childhood Practitioners working within this school of thought more often than not fail to acknowledge the damaging effects of discriminatory remarks and practices.

3.10.3 Cultural understandings

The key tenet of this school of thought is that children should be alerted to people's different ways of dressing, eating and living, which is often accomplished by creating special experiences such as having Indian food for lunch or using chopsticks. These experiences are aimed at helping children understand the similarities and differences between people, which is achieved through providing teaching and learning resources about diversity (Ibid). This school of thought is operationalised in a number of ways including the provision of learning materials and aesthetics which emphasize cultural tourism. In other words, "The texture, styles, colours and sounds in the classroom or early childhood centre offer tokenistic representations of aesthetic values that differ from the mainstream or dominant aesthetic values" (Ibid: 36). Regarding the early childhood programme, the representations of cultural values other than those of the dominant culture is tokenistic, which learning experiences about different groups restricted to special displays or projects. The image of the child in this school of thought is based on the premise that 'others' are different, which enforces the idea that 'others' are special because they are curious, unfamiliar, colourful and fascinating (Ibid). An obvious danger in adopting such an approach is the way that cultures are represented as simplistic, static and in stereotyped ways. Through this approach Practitioners are encouraged to develop a superficial understanding of diversity, which they in turn pass on to the children in their care as stereotypes and prejudices.

3.10.4 Equal opportunities

The equal opportunities school of thought holds that through the provision of equal opportunities to all, irrespective of differences, will result in equal outcomes for all. Early childhood programmes that adopt this approach believe that the learning environment must be

filled with information that enables children to absorb positive social messages and values, which in turn promotes an image of all children as essentially equal, thereby allowing them to participate fully in the programme (Ibid). Absorption-based learning materials and aesthetics are characteristic of this approach, and images, materials and stories focus on the strengths of the child so that children can participate and achieve in all activities regardless of their gender, race, culture or ability (Ibid). As regards programming and expectations, adults model non-stereotypical ways of speaking and Practitioners actively encourage all children to participate in all aspects of the programme. This school of thought is based on liberal and pluralistic cultural attitudes towards change. Although this approach has been adopted in the early childhood sector in numerous countries, it has been criticized for failing to assign children an active role in the socialization process or an inability to ignore or resist programme messages (Ibid). Furthermore, it does not permit them to help shape educational practices and curricula content by choosing what they consider valuable, and may in some instances actually support the status quo.

3.10.5 Anti-discrimination

The fifth school of thought that Mac Naughton (2006) addresses has built on the cultural understandings and equal opportunities approaches to acknowledge diversity. By addressing the negative effects of discrimination and providing descriptions of experiences as well as materials that challenge discrimination, this approach aims to transform the people, institutions and ideas that produce inequity and injustice (Ibid). A key tenet of this approach is that power relationships and ideologies create and sustain inequities and injustices and that early childhood pedagogies need to empower all involved to stand up for diversity and challenge discrimination in their lives and the lives of others. It is clear that this approach holds children as competent social actors and meaning-makers who are capable of thinking and acting in anti-discriminatory ways. The role of the Practitioner is to transform unequal structures and practices and engage proactively with diversity and with the effects of discrimination. In light of this, the learning materials and aesthetics as well as the programming and expectations are transformative in nature (Ibid). Issues of diversity appear on a daily basis throughout the programme and children are encouraged to value diversity and develop a non-discriminatory understanding of disability, culture, social differences, race and gender. A key aspect of the anti-discrimination approach is that adults

reflect critically with children about the effects of discrimination with the aim of creating a 'living democracy' (Ibid).

Little research has been undertaken evaluating the anti-discrimination approach; however, the research that has been undertaken indicates that this approach does have its difficulties. In some cases early childhood professionals may undermine the anti-discrimination approach in services that lack a commitment to this work by a team (Ibid). Furthermore, there is a lack of resources and training to support anti-discrimination approaches and little research should professionals wish to advocate for the implementation of such an approach among colleagues, families and policy makers.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 A qualitative research approach

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) there are two distinct differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Firstly, they refer to distinctions about the nature of knowledge, in other words, how one understands the world and the ultimate purpose of research, and secondly, they refer to different research methods and subsequently the type of generalizations and representations which are derived from the data collected and analysed. Looking at these differences from a purist's point of view, quantitative research is based on a form of "logical positivism", which assumes that there exist stable, social factors which present a single reality and which are separated from the feelings and beliefs of individuals (Ibid). On the other hand, qualitative research is centred on "constructionism", which assumes that multiple realities are socially constructed through individual, as well as collective, perceptions of the same situation (Ibid).

This research study follows a qualitative and interactive research approach. This methodology was chosen as it provides "understanding from the informants' point of view" (Bogden & Biklen, 2003) about the aspects of educational life that are under study. Following this, face-to-face techniques were used to collect data from participants within their natural environments, namely early childhood development classrooms for children aged three to six years. The *context* of the study is vitally important in qualitative research and it is only by observing what takes place in the setting in which it occurs that qualitative researchers can hope to understand that which they seek to investigate. The importance of the setting is highlighted by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) who writes:

If anthropological interpretation is constructing a reading of what happens, then to divorce it from what happens – from what in this time or that place specific people say, what they do, what is done to them, from the whole vast business of the world's to divorce it from its application and render it vacant. A good interpretation of anything – a poem, a person, a history, a ritual, an institution, a society – takes us to the heart of that of which it is the interpretation.

Qualitative research is about collecting, analyzing, interpreting and representing the beliefs, thoughts and perspectives of the research participants as accurately and fairly as possible.

Being constructivist in nature, the qualitative approach assumes reality as “multilayer, interactive, and a shared social experience interpreted by individuals” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 396). As I hope to show in the following chapter where I discuss the results obtained, the Practitioners and families who participated in the study were expressing what was ‘real’ to them, as this is what essentially directs their actions, their thoughts, as well as their feelings. By understanding the process of how the research participants construct meaning it is hoped that a greater understanding of the phenomenon under investigation can be achieved.

4.2 The research setting

4.2.1 Queenstown

With a population numbering around one hundred thousand, Queenstown is the commercial, administrative as well as educational centre of a prosperous farming district. Situated in what was known as the “Border Corridor” during apartheid – this corridor lay between two Bantustans, namely the Transkei and Ciskei – it was considered as part of South Africa and thereby only fit for white people to live in. This area was heavily fought over, with the apartheid government in the early 1980s attempting to remove the so called ‘Black-spot’ communities located in this corridor into the homeland areas. However, this was met by much resistance and after a long fought battle, in 1987 the government announced that it was abandoning its plan to remove these communities from the area. Today Queenstown is a hybrid mix of cultures, and serves as a very important town for the surrounding rural communities, especially in relation to educational opportunities.

The five ECD centres involved in this research initiative were located in the urban area of Queenstown. Three centres were located within the town centre (C1, C2, C3), one was located in a suburban area (C4), and one was located on the outskirts of the town close to a local informal settlement¹⁴ known as Mulusi (C5). In four centres (C1, C2, C3, C4) the majority of children were bussed in by taxi from the informal settlements and surrounding areas to attend these centres, as only a handful of children lived in close proximity to where the centre was located. The children attending C5 walked to school as they lived nearby.

¹⁴ Informal settlements are defined as residential areas in an urban locality inhabited by the very poor who have no access to tenured land of their own, and hence "squat" on vacant land, either private or public. (<http://www.gdrc.org/uem/define-squatter.html>).

With the exception of C5, all the centres showed a relatively high level of student diversity. By diversity I am referring to cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. This student population was made up predominantly of a mix of students of Black African, Coloured, and Asian backgrounds, as well as children from other African countries including Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Angola. Of the thirty three children attending C5, one was from Zimbabwe and another was Afrikaans, while the remaining students were all mother-tongue Xhosa speaking Africans. Three of the centres (C1, C2, C4) cater for children who come from households which have fewer socio-economic difficulties. This was established from the school fees which the families must pay, the areas in which these children live, and general discussions with the Practitioners and families. The remaining two centres (C3, C5) have lower school fees and the children come from poorer communities.

4.2.2 Cape Town

Cape Town is a city with approximately three million inhabitants and is the second most populated city in South Africa. During apartheid, residents of suburbs which had been pluricultural and diverse were removed if they were not white, with whole suburbs being demolished. These residents were forcibly removed to the surrounding areas away from the city centre and designated 'white-only' regions. Today these areas remain in appalling condition as informal settlements with non-existent sanitary services and poor access to adequate transport, educational centres and so forth. On the other hand, the previously 'white-only' areas are home to the wealthy and have remained home to predominantly middle-class families.

The five centres who participated in this study were located in four urban communities. One centre was situated in the central business district (CBD) of Cape Town (C6), another in a middle-upper class suburban area called Hatfield (C7), two were located in the working class suburban area Elsie's Rivier (C8, C9), and the last one in an informal settlement known as Pelendaba (C10). These five centres therefore demonstrated a high degree of differentiation in the socio-economic backgrounds of the children and families, with the C6, C8, C9 and C10 catering to children from poorer communities, while C7 catered to children from wealthier families.

The inhabitants of Cape Town are predominantly of Xhosa-speaking African origin and Afrikaans-speaking Coloured origin. There is also an English-speaking white population and an increasing immigrant population, primarily from other African countries. Regarding diversity in

the student population at the centres, C6 catered to a large number of African immigrant children, Coloured children as well as a few Xhosa-speaking children. The majority of the students at C7 were from white English-speaking households, although there were a few Chinese and Indian students, Coloured students and Xhosa-speaking African students. C8 and C9 catered to Coloured children with a small number of African children present. C10 on the other hand catered to African children with a handful of Coloured students and two children who had recently arrived from Angola.

The ties between the Eastern and Western Cape Provinces have always been, and remain, strong. Due to forced migration during apartheid, as well as economic migration today, many people live with a ‘foot’ in each province and continually move back and forth between the two. A common occurrence is for families to send their young children to live with their grandparents in the Eastern Cape while they find work in the Western Cape, and more specifically Cape Town. It is no secret that the people living in the Eastern Cape Province, especially in the rural areas, are the elderly and the very young. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has tremendously increased the pressure placed on the old in the Eastern Cape, as families fall victim to the disease and the children are all sent to live with grandparents who only have their state pension from which to live.

4.3 A case study design

For the purposes of this study a case study design was chosen. The use of a case study design has many advantages in educational research, including contributing to theory, practice, policy, and social issues and action (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Making use of this design means that the data analysis focuses on one phenomenon, which the researcher selects to understand in depth regardless of the number of sites or participants for the study (Ibid). The case study approach is most effectively used to study “the interpretative, subjective dimensions of educational phenomena” (Cohen & Manion, 1994), and was therefore chosen as the most suitable design.

In this research project the phenomenon under study is how Practitioners working in preschool classrooms for children aged three to six years manage cultural diversity. As Bogden and Biklen (2003) note, there are many different types of qualitative case studies and each type

has special considerations for determining both its feasibility for study and the procedures to employ. In order to increase the generalizability and the diversity of the data collected, I decided to undertake a multi-case study.

A multi-case study is adopted when researchers study two or more subjects, settings, or depositories of data, and can take a variety of forms (Ibid). This involves selecting several cases so as to make cross-case comparisons (Heck, 2006). It is advisable, when undertaking a multi-case study, that the researcher does not undertake fieldwork at more than one site at a time in order to avoid confusion with the diverse data collected.

4.4 Research Variables

During the planning phase of the project I identified variables to assist me in organizing and interpreting the information obtained through data collection. These variables were gleaned from the research questions and the data collection instruments used. These preconceived variables are highlighted in Table 4 below. In order to ensure that information relating to all of these variables was obtained, the table indicates how questions pertaining to the different variables were addressed in each of the data collection schedules utilized.

VARIABLES	In-depth Interviews		Participant Observation		Document Analysis	
	Table	Item	Table	Item	Table	Item
Cultural Diversity	9	1, 2, 16	10	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	11	1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9
	12	2, 3, 6				
Social Integration	9	3, 4, 10, 11, 15, 21, 32	10	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	11	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	12	5, 6, 7, 13, 15				
Values	9	5, 6, 7, 28, 29	10	1, 3, 4, 5	11	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	12	1, 4, 8, 14, 15				
Attitudes	9	4, 8, 9, 12, 19, 24, 25	10	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	11	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
	12	9, 11, 14				
Knowledge	9	12, 13, 14, 30	10	3, 4, 5, 6	11	6, 7, 8, 9
	12	3, 5, 12				
Strategies	9	17, 18, 19, 31	10	1, 2, 3, 4	11	2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
	12	1, 4, 10, 12				

Table 4. Research variables and how they correspond to items outlined in the interview and participant observation schedules, as well as the documents analysed.

Definitions of the variables identified for use in this research effort are defined in Table 5 below.

VARIABLE	DEFINITION
Cultural Diversity	The differences in language, customs, beliefs, meanings and values between people from different ethnic backgrounds that is expressed in their daily lives.
Social Integration	Equal access and acceptance for all: the process of opening a group, community, place or organization to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or social class.
Values	Beliefs of a person or social group in which they have an emotional interest.
Attitudes	Personal view of something which affects the way a person thinks and behaves.
Knowledge	Familiarity, awareness, or understanding gained through experience or study.
Strategies	A plan of action resulting from strategy or intended to accomplish a specific goal.

Table 5. Definitions of the variables employed in this study

4.5 Selection of key research participants

In order to meet the research objectives set out in Chapter three, data needed to be collected from ECD Practitioners working in ECD classrooms for children aged between three to six years, which were located in the two urban communities chosen for the purposes of this study (Queenstown and Cape Town). The first step in the sample process was to determine the *population* from which the sample was to be drawn, namely ECD Practitioners. From within this population a *sample frame* had to be defined. This process is outlined below. Finally, *sample selection* was undertaken using a non-probability sampling strategy, whereby the participants were chosen according to convenience and accessibility. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001) this type of sampling is in fact the most common type in educational research. Non-probability samples are often used when there is no available sampling frame, when the cost of probability sampling in terms of money and time is too high, and thirdly, when planning in-depth qualitative research (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). It is acknowledged

that this type of sampling has limitations. The main limitation is that there is no precise way to generalize from the sample to any type of population. This does, however, not render the research findings worthless; instead, it means that caution is needed when generalizing research findings. The strengths and weaknesses of using non-probability convenience sampling are highlighted in the following table:

Strengths¹⁵	Weaknesses
Less costly and time consuming	Difficult to generalize to other subjects
Ease of administration	Less representative of an identified population
Usually assures high participation rate	Results dependant on unique characteristics of the sample
Generalizations possible to similar subjects	Greater likelihood of error due to experimenter or subject bias

Table 6. Strengths and Weaknesses of Non-probability convenience sampling.

The first step towards selecting research participants was to delineate the research setting. I chose to work in two of the nine Provinces of South Africa. In the Eastern Cape Province the urban community of Queenstown was chosen as a study area, while in the Western Cape Province the city of Cape Town was chosen as the study area. These two locations were chosen due to the presence of a well-established ECD NPO at each location through which Practitioners could be located to participate in this study. The NPO in Queenstown is called Lesedi La Bana, while the NPO located in Cape Town is known as the Cape Town Early Learning Centre (hereafter CTELC)¹⁶. I also have experience working alongside these two NPOs and was therefore familiar with the contexts in which they work. These two communities also offered interesting locations for comparison. Queenstown is an urban community which is much smaller in size than Cape Town. Furthermore, population diversity is different in that Queenstown is predominantly Xhosa and English, while in the area of Cape Town in which I worked there live predominantly Afrikaans and Xhosa speakers.

¹⁵ Adapted from McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 178).

¹⁶ The names of both ECD NPOs have been changed to protect their privacy.

Having experience working within the early childhood development sector in South Africa I knew that locating early childhood development centres to participate in this study would not present a problem. This was due to my involvement with networks such as the National Early Childhood Development Alliance (NECDA), whose members were made up of seventy two NPOs who were responsible for training the majority of ECD Practitioners across the country. Due to financial and time constraints I knew that it would not be possible to speak to teachers in more than two of the nine provinces that make up South Africa. I therefore selected to work within the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape Provinces as I had worked extensively in both and therefore had a good understanding of the settings within which these centres operated. The choice of these locations was influenced by the two NPOs which were located at these sites. Being familiar with the organisational structures as well as their respective curricula on which the Practitioners were trained greatly assisted the data collection procedure. Although I was by no means an ‘insider’, I had had sufficient contact with these organisations to be trusted enough to be given access to whatever data I needed. This being said, I felt that I was sufficiently an outsider in order for me as researcher to view the organisation and its work objectively and therefore enhance data validity.

My first step was to contact the Directors of both Lesedi La Bana and the CTELC, which was done via emails and telephonic conversations, in order to obtain permission to use their records to contact Practitioners to participate in this study. Once I had received permission from the Directors, I was placed in contact with a senior staff member from each organisation who was responsible for assisting me with my research needs. I worked closely alongside these staff members in order to identify possible research participants. The first step was to determine criteria according to which the vast amount of potential participants could be narrowed down.

The following criteria were used to select potential participants:

- ❖ *The Practitioner had to have completed her National Certificate in ECD Level 4 between 2005 and 2007.*
- ❖ *The Practitioner had to be employed at an early childhood centre and have worked at the centre for at least 6 months.*
- ❖ *The centre where the Practitioner worked had to be located in an urban area.*
- ❖ *The Practitioner had to be working with children aged between 3-6 years.*

Once the above-mentioned perimeters had been applied I was left with a list of forty and fifty seven candidates from each organisation respectively from which to draw my sample¹⁷. Due to time and financial constraints, non-probability sampling was utilized to determine the ten Practitioners who would become research participants. With the lists in hand I phoned Practitioners starting from the top of the list and the first five who agreed to participate were selected. It must be noted that due to outdated telephone numbers as well as non-responsiveness, the Practitioners chosen were not the first five names on the list. In the case of Lesedi La Bana I made twelve telephone calls to secure five research participants, while for the CTELC list I was required to make twenty five telephone calls in total to secure the necessary five participants.

Name¹⁸	Province	Gender	Age	Mother-tongue	Age of children in class
Sue	Eastern Cape	Female	45	English	3 – 5 years
Thandi	Eastern Cape	Female	43	IsiXhosa	4 – 6 years
Adele	Eastern Cape	Female	38	Nepalese	3 – 5 years
Beth	Eastern Cape	Female	49	English	4 – 5 years
Joy	Eastern Cape	Female	53	Afrikaans	3 – 5 years
Isabel	Western Cape	Female	28	English	5 – 6 years
Sara	Western Cape	Female	44	Afrikaans	4 – 6 years
Khaya	Western Cape	Female	27	IsiXhosa	4 – 6 years
Lizaan	Western Cape	Female	48	Afrikaans	4 – 5 years
Janet	Western Cape	Female	36	Afrikaans	4 – 6 years

Table 7. A brief profile of the ten participating Practitioners.

The average age of the Practitioners in this study is 41 years, which is close to the average age of Practitioners as identified in the nationwide ECD audit (38 years). All the research participants are female which is not surprising considering that ninety-nine percent of ECD Practitioners in South Africa are female (Williams & Samuels, 2001). The home language of three of the Practitioners is English; four stated that Afrikaans is their home language, while there were two IsiXhosa speaking Practitioners and one Practitioner who speaks Nepalese at home, having moved to South Africa from Nepal in 1998. Although the ages of the children being

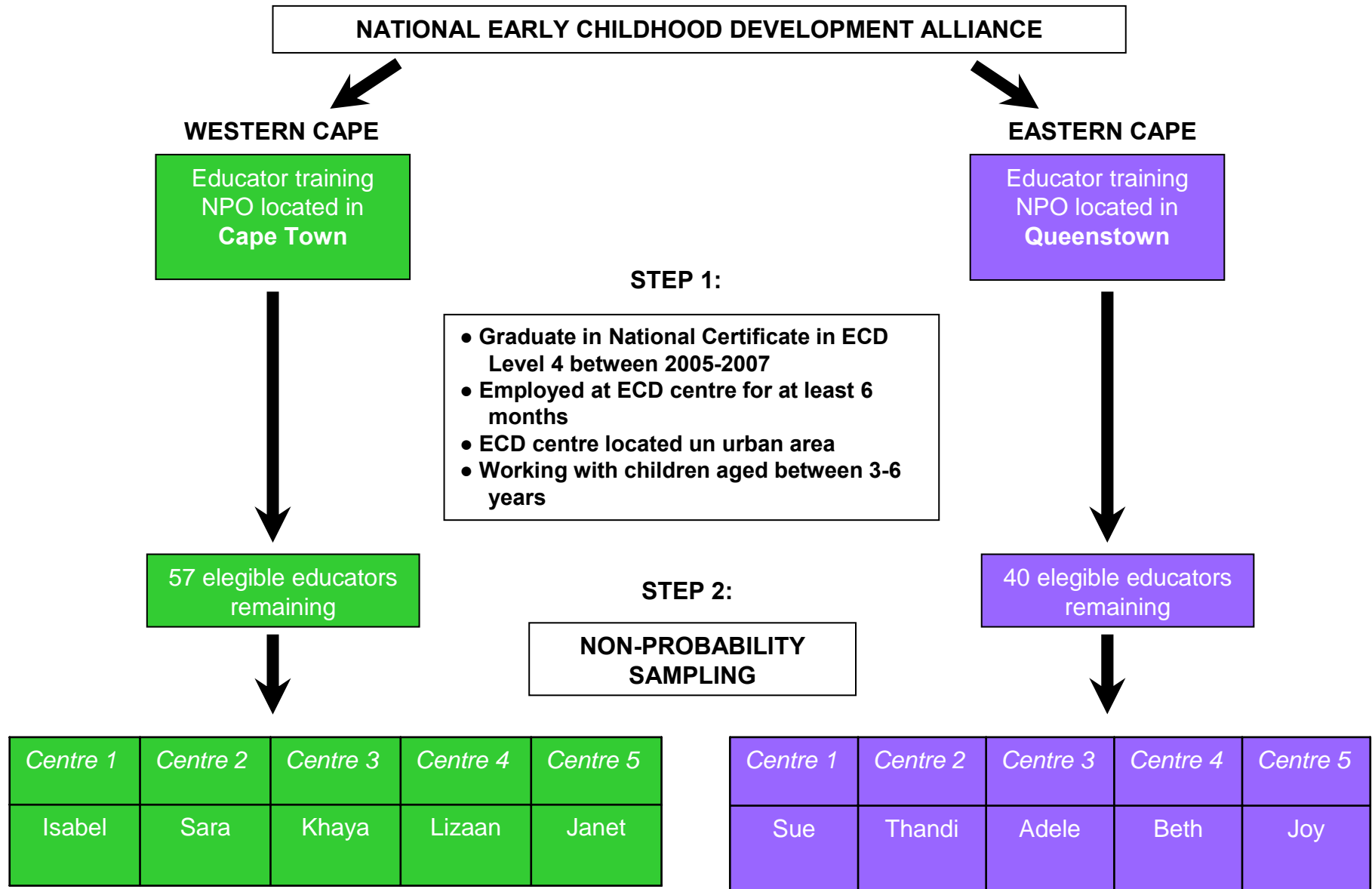
¹⁷ While in Queenstown the only ECD Practitioner training organisation is Lesedi La Bana, in Cape Town there are numerous. For this reason the number of potential participants in each organisation was not vastly different although Cape Town has a much greater population than Queenstown.

¹⁸ The names of the participating Practitioners have been changed to protect their identities.

taught by these Practitioners varied somewhat, they all fell within the three to six year age bracket.

Many authors allude to the fact that it is difficult, especially for novice researchers, to determine the ‘correct’ number of research participants to include in any given study (see Bogden & Biklen, 1998; Thomas, 2006 cited in (Conrad & Serlin, 2006). This is largely due to the fact that as the research goals of studies differ, so does the ‘sample size’ required to meet these goals. In this study I followed Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999) who, in an attempt to provide guidelines to aid researchers in defining their sample size, suggest that when employing a case study design 6-8 units of analysis should suffice.

FIGURE 4: SELECTION OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



Although this study focuses particularly on centre-based care, and therefore looks at Practitioners and their role as educators of young children, it is acknowledged that families are vitally important. It was therefore necessary to speak to families of the children attending ECD centres where the Practitioners taught, in order to get their In the research design, interviews with families of two children from each centre was proposed, however, this proved very problematic due to the difficulty in contacting families, time constraints felt by the family members, the fact that most children were dropped off and collected from school by taxis and not their families, and finally that families often worked away from home and were therefore not available to be interviewed. The design was therefore changed to accommodate this, and instead of interviews, focus group discussions were held with families from two centres (one in Queenstown and one in Cape Town).

These focus groups were organized in conjunction with the quarterly meetings held by the Practitioners for the families of the children attending the centres. At the start of the meeting the Practitioner introduced me and my research aims, and asked the family members present if they would mind if after the meeting I held a focus group with them. The families agreed to do this and all participated. The focus groups lasted for forty-five minutes, and most of the families participated eagerly. The first focus group consisted of twenty five participants, while the second one consisted of nineteen participants. At the start of these discussions the Practitioner, aware that her presence could influence the openness of families regarding my questions, excused herself from the room and returned once I had closed the session. Although this interaction with the families was very limited, the flexibility of the research design allowed me to adapt my research strategy accordingly.

	Number of family members who participated	Gender Breakdown	
		Female	Male
Queenstown	25	15	10
Cape Town	19	14	5

Table 8. Number and gender breakdown of family members who participated in the focus group interviews.

4.6 Access to research sites

Gaining access to the ECD centres where the Practitioners work did not prove too problematic. The decision to identify key research participants through both Lesedi La Bana and the CTELC was a sensible one, as I soon discovered that the Practitioners felt much more comfortable about my presence at their centres knowing that I had contacted them with the help of the respective NPO through whom they were trained. The staff member who assisted me at the CTELC informed me that two of the Practitioners whom I had contacted had phoned her to confirm that I was who I said I was (a student collecting data for a university research project). Having the staff member vouch for me ensured that the Practitioners were open and forthcoming with the information that I required. One of these Practitioners informed me that she had “checked me out” to ensure that I was not a government official coming to evaluate her under false pretence.

In order to ensure that my presence at the respective ECD centre did not cause any problems, I spoke directly with the ECD centre Principals regarding my wish to undertake research at their centre. Permission was granted by all the Principals who were content that the Practitioners involved were supportive of my research endeavour. Only one of the ten centres visited (a Grade R class) was linked to a public school, which meant that I required approval to undertake research from the provincial Department of Education. After explaining the purpose of my research to the Principal she assured me that it would be no problem and spoke directly with the department to inform them of my presence at the school. The only condition that I had to meet in order to undertake my research was to announce my arrival at the Principal’s office and sign the visitor’s book.

4.7 Data collection strategies

In light of the qualitative research methodology which I chose to follow in this study, I originally adopted the methods of in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis as the means to collect data. As the fieldwork progressed it became apparent that I would need to adopt another strategy, namely focus group interviews. Using different research methods which were congruent with the qualitative

approach I was able to triangulate my data and thereby enhance the validity of my research findings.

4.7.1 Multi-method strategies

As Patton (2002) describes, fieldwork is more than only one method or technique and is rather a source of multiple information that provides a broad perspective regarding that which is being investigated. By using a combination of Participant Observation, interviews and document analysis as the main methods in this study, I have used various data sources to validate and verify my findings. As each type and source of data has its strengths and weaknesses, I have augmented the validity of my data by ensuring that the strengths of one approach compensates for the weaknesses of another (Ibid).

4.7.2 In-depth interviews

The principal strategy employed for collecting data was in-depth interviews. These interviews were carried out with ten early childhood Practitioners. Although the duration of the interviews varied, the average interview was one and a half hours in length, with the shortest interview lasting one hour and ten minutes, and the longest interview lasting two hours.

McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 443) define in-depth interviews as “open-response questions to obtain data of *participant meanings* – how individuals conceive of their world and how they explain or “make sense” of the important events in their lives”. By making use of in-depth interviews the participants were thereby able to express their thoughts, beliefs and perspectives about the world in which they live and work, in their own words. With the information obtained I was able, as the researcher, to bring together and interpret the data and formulate explications based on the details of the respective interviews.

The interviews were centred on open-response questions relating to the research objectives, which I had prepared. However, as Rubin and Rubin (1995) point out, each research participant is different and relates to the researcher in a distinct manner. I

therefore adopted a flexible approach whereby, although steering the interview at times to ensure that I obtained the necessary data, the general tone was conversational and allowed for the participants to speak about what they felt was important. Although a challenging exercise, if researchers are capable of directing the conversations to answer the research questions, the interviews can capture an in-depth look at the reality of each participant (Ibid).

I prepared an interview guide which pertained to the relevant preconceived variables identified in the research design, which I wanted to discuss during the interview. However, the sequence was decided as the interview progressed to ensure that the conversational tone was not lost and that the participants did not feel as if they were being interrogated. I felt that I would only receive insights into the life-worlds of the participants if they felt comfortable speaking to me, providing me with information that was not what they thought I wanted to hear, but rather information which they wanted to share with someone they saw more as a collaborator. The interviews were, with two exceptions, carried out in the Practitioners' classrooms, while one interview was carried out in the lounge of the Practitioner's home and the other in the outdoor area of the ECD centre where the Practitioner worked.

ITEM	QUESTION
1	What do you believe are the aims of early childhood development programmes? How are these aims realized?
2	When we talk about intercultural education, what comes to mind?
3	How do you think young children between the ages of 3 and 6 years can benefit from participating in an intercultural education project?
4	Does your ECD centre have any policies regarding social inclusion/exclusion?
5	Can you tell me about your own educational experiences?

Table 9. Example of questions from the interview guide for early childhood development Practitioners¹⁹.

¹⁹ The full interview schedule can be found in annexure one of this document.

In order to record the interviews, various strategies were utilized. Firstly, I took notes during the interviews, writing down key words upon which I could expand once the interview had ended. Due to the conversational tone of the interview I felt that it was off-putting for the interviewee to watch me make notes as we progressed. I therefore kept note taking down to the minimum and wrote out, with the help of the keywords, all which had taken place during the interview, including the body language of the participant and other contextual factors which I had noticed once I had bid farewell to the respective participant.

With the consent of the participant I used a cassette voice recorder to record the interview. All participants consented to recording their interview sessions. This was a very useful tool as I could then transcribe verbatim what had been said. The transcription was done as soon as possible after the interview in order to record anything that was unclear on the recording. Interview elaborations also formed a fundamental part of the interview process. These elaborations consisted of my self-reflections in relation to my role as researcher, the rapport which I had established with the participants, interviewee's reactions and any other additional information which I believed was important to the study. McMillan & Schumacher (2001) note that this is a crucial time for reflection and elaboration on the data obtained and assists with establishing quality control for valid data.

4.7.3 Participant Observation

Owing to the inherent complexities in social situations, one encounters limitations in relation to what one can learn from what people say in a verbal interview, or what is written in a document to be analysed (Patton 2002). In order to gain a more in-depth understanding regarding these complexities, participant observation can be carried out. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) declared that the objective of interpretative analysis is to provide "thick description", in other words, a detailed description of the characteristics, processes, transactions and contexts which make up the phenomenon under study, as well as the role of the researcher in the construction of this description.

For the purposes of this study participant observation was carried out at ten early childhood development centres. As this was not an ethnographic study I did not spend a prolonged time at each centre, instead my time at each centre was divided up over a two month period. On average I spent two full days at each ECD centre. There was one week in April when the schools were closed for holidays. This week was spent catching up on transcribing and undertaking preliminary analysis of the data that I had obtained up until that point. Participant observation was therefore carried out to complement the in-depth interviews which I undertook with the Practitioners and was very useful as a tool to corroborate my interview findings.

I spent the majority of my observation time in the classroom of the Practitioners whom I had interviewed. During my time at the centre I also spoke to other staff members such as colleagues and the centre Principal. This was on an informal basis and provided better insight into the observations that I was making. As my main observational space was that of the classroom, I interacted at length with the children who drew me into their games easily and happily. By involving myself in the daily programme I was able to observe the Practitioner in action and gain deeper insight into her educational concerns, her relationship with the children in her care, the attitudes she displayed, and the strategies she employed when working with the children.

AREA		TO OBSERVE	
1.	Centre environment	1.	Who drops off and collects the children before and after school?
		2.	What interactions take place?
		3.	What is talked about?
		4.	Who is present in the centre during the school day?
		5.	How do these people interact with one another?
		6.	What values and attitudes are reflected by their conversations?
		7.	How are children received at the centre?
		8.	How committed and motivated are the educators?

Table 10. Example of the Participant Observation guide used during the researcher's visit to the early childhood development centres²⁰.

In order to assist with capturing the observations, I made use of both a digital camera for taking photos and a video camera for recording purposes. I was sure to obtain permission from the Practitioner before using any of these instruments. In all instances my requests were agreed upon. When setting up my visits to the centre I communicated my desire to take pictures and videos to the Principal. This was very important as the recordings would include the children in the classroom and I had to ensure that this would not be a problem for the families of the children. All the Principals assured me that it would be no problem and that I was free to record as I wished. This of course was easier said than done. I found that taking photographs was not too difficult, but when I brought out the video camera and pressed 'record' the children eagerly peered into the lens to see what this was all about. As the day progressed the children lost interest and I also began setting the video camera down on a high surface in order to record what was taking place. I made sure that the Practitioner was aware that although I was not handling the video camera, it was still recording. I did not want the Practitioner to feel that I was

²⁰ The full participant observation schedule can be found in annexure two of this document.

surreptitiously recording things which I hoped she did not see. There were instances when taking photographs and videos was not a problem. This included taking inventories of objects such as the bulletin board, the contents of the book case, the daily programme schedule, policies that were displayed on the walls of the classroom, posters and pictures.

4.7.4 Document analysis

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:502), “documents are records of past events...written or printed materials that may be official or unofficial, public or private, published or unpublished, prepared intentionally to preserve a historical record or prepared to serve an immediate practical purpose”. Documents, therefore, constitute a rich source of information about people, programmes and organisations (Patton, 2002).

As a qualitative researcher one is in a unique position to study documents in relation to the analysis of the social practices of daily life in which these documents are constructed and utilized. This therefore serves as another means by which meaning is given to activities through which each person reconstructs, sustains, contests and changes her or his social reality. However, Patton (2002: 499) indicates specific challenges regarding document analysis. The challenges include:

- Obtaining access to documents
- Understanding how and why the documents were produced
- Determining the accuracy of the documents
- Linking the documents to other sources, including interviews and observations
- Taking apart and demystifying institutional texts

The documents analysed in this study include official documents as well as personal documents. The official documents include those published by the South African government, the national Departments of Education and Social Development, documents produced by the ECD NPOs, as well as the documents at the early childhood development centres. Personal documents, defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2001) as any firsthand document which describes the experiences, beliefs, knowledge and

values of someone, include anecdotal records, lesson plans, observation commentaries made by the Practitioner about the children, as well as the assignments completed by the Practitioners in order to obtain the Level 4 National Certificate in Early Childhood Development.

<i>Documents analysed</i>		<i>Author</i>
1	South African Constitution	Government of South Africa
2	South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996	South Africa National Department of Education
3	The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa	South Africa National Department of Education
4	White Paper Number 5: Early Childhood Development	South Africa National Department of Education
5	Guidelines for Early Childhood Development Services	South Africa National Department of Social Development
6	National Certificate: Early Childhood Development Level 4	South African Qualifications Authority
7	Curriculum	Accredited Educator Training Organisations
8	Written assignments of educators	Educators
9	Early Childhood Development centre policies	Early Childhood Development centres

Table 11. List of documents analysed.

4.7.5 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews assist with obtaining a better understanding of a particular challenge, programme, or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). This type of interview allows individual perceptions and ideas to stimulate group members and thereby increase the quality and the richness of data obtained (Ibid). I saw this in the focus group interviews carried out with the families, as while in the beginning some participants were shy and the discussion was dominated by a few, after a while more and more family members began to contribute their perspectives regarding the phenomenon under study. However, although the families, in

general, seemed to warm up and become actively engaged in the focus group discussion, there were three participants who came to me once the focus group had closed in order to discuss the topics about which we had been speaking. It was clear that they had felt intimidated by voicing their thoughts in front of the others and preferred to give me their opinions on a one-to-one basis.

ITEM	QUESTIONS
1	What do you believe are the aims of early childhood development programmes?
2	How would you describe the relationship between your child and a.) her / his Practitioner and b.) her / his classmates?
3	When we talk about intercultural education, what comes to mind?
4	How do you think young children between the ages of 3 and 6 years can benefit from participating in an intercultural education project?
5	What differences can you see between your educational experiences and that of your child today?

Table 12. Example of the focus group interview schedule²¹.

4.8 Data analysis

The way in which data analysis is carried out depends on the way in which the research was designed. Broadly speaking, Schwandt (1997) defines data analysis as:

...the activity of making sense of interpreting, or theorizing the data. It is both art and science, and it is undertaken by means of a variety of procedures that facilitate working back and forth between data and ideas. It includes the processes of organizing, reducing, and describing the data, and warranting those interpretations. If data could speak for themselves analysis would not be necessary.

Schwandt's definition alludes to the cyclical nature of data analysis and the need to establish continuous movement "between data and ideas" as one engages in "organizing, reducing and describing the data". Tentative data analysis therefore begins as the

²¹ The full focus group interview schedule can be found in annexure three of this document.

researcher mentally processes many ideas and facts while collecting data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Apart from the data gleaned through use of the data collection methods outlined in the previous section, I also kept a journal which was used to record daily research activities, decisions regarding the selection of data, emergent themes, new research ideas, problems that came up during the data collection phase and so forth.

As data analysis is an ongoing cyclical process which is integrated into all phases of the qualitative research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001), I began to analyse my data soon after data collection had commenced, thereby engaging in interim analysis. By scanning all the data obtained at various moments during data collection, I was able to obtain a global perspective and thereby look for recurring meanings that could become major themes or patterns. Interim analysis was also a vital activity for me in order to keep me focused on gathering information that was pertinent to my study. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) point out that most qualitative data are so extensive that several studies could be generated. It is therefore imperative that the researcher narrows the research inquiry focus in order to meet his/her research objectives.

The first step in the analysis of the data was to organise the data, a process which I began after the first two early childhood centres had been visited and the interviews carried out. This process involved printing out the transcribed interviews and field visit information and beginning to divide the information into analysis units, each one with what McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 468) call a “chunk of meaning”. This was repeated for all interviews and field visits as they were completed. Next, working within the framework provided by the predetermined variables, I went about *inductively* coding the data into topics. This was achieved by reading through all the data carefully and more than once, in order to get a ‘sense of the whole’, in other words, the larger phenomenon under study. With this overall picture in mind I began to read through a data set, for example an interview transcript, and generate topics which were written in the margin of the script. An example of a coded interview transcript is provided below (Figure 5).

R = Researcher

B = Beth

Figure 5. An extract from a coded interview transcript

Practitioner training	{	R: Can you tell me about your training experience?
Materials and resources		B: I did Level 4 at Lesedi La Bana, and then I did the TOT (Training of Teachers) afterwards.
	{	R: And with this training you received, did you find that you dealt with diversity with regards to any of your modules, or materials?
		B: Tangentially. There is <u>a whole section on making sure that you have stories that are intercultural...for example, having our jigsaw puzzles that have different racial groups.</u> So there is quite a lot on the stories and the equipment, like dolls....more materials and resource focused.
Stereotypes	{	You know there is another anecdote...the same thing with little Annie Fang. I had a poster up in the classroom where I had "things I can do", with pictures of different children doing skipping etc. And I had one of the <u>little Japanese, or Asian children on the poster doing karate.</u> And Annie walked into the classroom... You know <u>we always think of the black-white thing</u> so we make sure that we have a lot of black children and a lot of white children in illustrations. And she looked at the poster and she said
Racial identity		<u>"Look, look, there is a little china just like me!"</u> And it just broke my heart, because I thought she was just one [one Chinese person in the school] but for her it was so important just the face and the "Just like me!"
Children's awareness		R: To identify with something...
Practitioner reflection	{	B: Yes, yes... and that just illustrated to me the importance of having a diversity of illustrations, books...it is very important.
		So I think it would be very useful to have in training...to flesh out what there is...there is some, but I cant recall ever having a very big section and it is, especially here where we have quite <u>a large Muslim, Asian group in our class...we have a Congolese boy and we have the Xhosa community...so there is quite a lot of diversity, and a more developed programme helping us understand this diversity would be useful.</u>
Cultural diversity	{	R: and what do you think about the relationship between prejudice and people's ability to reflect on their own experiences?
Diversity training		B: <u>People all have their own prejudices...</u> you see <u>we have all grown up in specific circumstances...</u> It is so important to listen to the comments in our own head that you have to challenge...and also in relation to expectations. People say very hurtful things to children without even realising...and you can see that those <u>children are developing according to what is expected of them...</u>
Prejudice	{	
Lived experience		
Children's awareness		

Once this had been completed for all the data sets, I listed all the topics on a separate sheet (using the Microsoft Excel programme) with one column for each data set. I then compared all the topics for duplication and overlapping meanings. I grouped together topics that were similar, each with their own smaller sub-categories. As data analysis continued, I looked for developing patterns among the variables by adopting the *constant comparison* technique (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). This technique

involved comparing each variable with other variables in order to identify their distinctive attributes.

Once the topic and subtopics had been refined, I took a clean data set and applied the provisional classification system which I had developed. By engaging in this process I was able to identify which topics occurred repeatedly, as well as identify which unique topics arose which I felt were important to the research purpose and thereby necessary to include. Once the topics had been sufficiently reduced and refined, the next step was to develop the topics into categories. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 473) a category is “an abstract name that represents the *meaning* of similar topics”. It is important to note here that certain topics may form part of more than one category as one topic may have several connotations (Ibid). The construction of categories was guided by the variables used in the study, as well as the research objectives and the research instruments. Next I began to look for the patterns which emerged as I compared and contrasted categories and topics. Looking for these *patterns of meaning* was an exhaustive exercise as I moved back and forth between the data, the topics, the categories and my own personal hunches as to what the data was telling me. Triangulation was a very useful tool here as I used different data sources, situations and methods to see what patterns continued to emerge, while, at times a single event or occurrence was significant in itself and was therefore labelled as meaningful and worthy of attention.

4.9 Strategies to enhance the validity of the study

In qualitative studies it is according to both the data collection and analysis techniques that claims of validity are made (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001). There are a number of strategies which can be used to increase the validity of a study. In order to enhance the validity of my research study, a multi-method strategy was adopted. This allowed for triangulation during data collection and analysis, which increased the probability that our findings would be compatible with a great variety of data. Other strategies which we employed to increase the validity of our study included using participant verbatim language in order to illustrate participant’s meanings, thereby insuring that their voices were neither lost nor oppressed. During the data collection

phase we made use of voice recorders, photographs as well as videos in order to ensure that the information obtained was accurate and provided a relatively complete record. Finally, a strategy called “member checking” (Ibid: 410) was utilized, which involved me as the researcher frequently confirming observations and participants meanings with individuals in a casual and informal manner. At times, information gleaned from the Practitioners during the in-depth interviews was not entirely clear to me, and I made use of my time as a participant observer in the classroom to causally probe the Practitioners for more information in order to obtain a deeper understanding of what had been said.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter presents the final step in the data analysis process, namely the reporting and interpretation of the research findings. The presentation of the findings includes data collected from both the ECD Practitioners and families. As the Practitioners were the centre focus in this research project, it follows that the findings lean heavily towards the data collected from these Practitioners. Although modest, the information gleaned from the families who participated in this study is also presented.

5.1 Understanding diversity: ‘It’s not only a black-white thing’

Understanding the types of diversity in the classroom goes beyond the more obvious racial markers which remain a key feature of South African society today. Sue, an introspective and empathetic Practitioner with many years teaching experience in both Namibia and South Africa, notes that:

We all have baggage...there is no one who is untouched by the past. But unless we sit down and confront it, and work out strategies to improve relationships, we are never going to work through our differences. And it’s not just a black-white thing...it must be an overall thing, how do you treat people...how do you treat the gardener and the madam...to see people as people [Sue, p. 12].

The starting point for this study was to identify how Practitioners and families view cultural diversity and social integration. From this point on, their values and attitudes regarding these concepts could be further explored and the knowledge and strategies needed to promote respect for cultural diversity and to foster integration could be identified.

When asking Practitioners to discuss the cultural diversity in their classrooms, six out of the ten Practitioners categorized their students according to their racial group, followed by four Practitioners who identified the diversity in their class according to the language group to which the children belonged. Religion was also identified as a marker of cultural diversity by six out of the ten Practitioners.

Considering the increasing number of immigrants from other countries coming to South Africa in search of better opportunities, it was possible to find children of various nationalities, such as Zimbabweans, Congolese, Angolans, Nigerians, Indians and Pakistanis enrolled at the ECD centres visited. The following excerpts are taken from the in-depth interviews with Practitioners regarding the diversity in their classrooms:

*Ja, daar is kleurlings, Xhosa speakers en dan het ons die tweetjies Angolia, en dan het ons een van, wat is die plek se naam...Pakistani?...so ons het 'n diversity von leerlinge. En dan het ons ook 'n blanke meisitjie gehat maar hulle [haar gesin] het weer getrek na 'n andere plek toe.*²² [Janet, p. 3].

There is a lot of diversity. We have the children that are Xhosa speaking, then those that are Muslim and also from Congo or Angola and then we have Nigerians, we call them all just Nigerians... because the parents sometimes don't understand us when we speak or when we ask them something [Lizaan, p. 1].

There are different ages groups, and different people like Coloured people, and white people and Indian people...mixed colours [Khaya, p. 2].

We have mainly Xhosa speakers here, and one Coloured child...but she plays in Xhosa with all her friends...it is excellent...you should hear her sing in Xhosa! [Thandi, p. 7].

The influx of immigrants into South Africa has a direct impact on the ECD classroom, as well as on the Practitioner, LIESL. This Practitioner showed empathetic understanding towards these children and their plight:

J: Ek dink dat hierdie twee kinders moes seker mal baie verskrik oorall word want het jy gesien hoe hulle by mekaar an die selfde tafel sit? Ek het al probeer om hulle te split, maar dan sê hy, "ek wil by my i-sister sit", en sy sister by hom. Hulle is rerig broer en sister. Hulle wil nie apart sit nie.

Die ouers het vir ons vertel hoe hulle in die land ingekom het. Soos sy (die ma) nou vir my vertel het, het hulle geloop en loop tot hulle oor die grens kom. En dan moes hulle 'n taxi gekry het wan hulle nou oor die grens is. So dit is nou eintlik 'n bietjie baie wat die kinders moet deur gaan as 'n man en 'n vrou en die kinders is...dit is baie gevaarlik. Nou ons het 'n noue band met die polisie en toe het die polisie eendag, hulle kom gee ons shows so dat die kinders nie 'n vrees vir hulle het nie...en toe het hy geondek dat hulle hier is (the angolans)...en toe het hy vir

²² Yes, there are Coloureds, Xhosa speakers and then we also have two little Angolans, and then we also have one from...what is that place called? Pakistan?...so we have a diversity of learners. And then we also had a white little girl, but they [her family] moved again to another place [Janet, p. 3].

hulle raad gegee om hoe hulle moet nou gaan, en hoe om sertifikaate van binneland se saake te gekry en nou het hulle dit. Hy het hulle baie gehelp om dit te doen.

R: So wat dink jy is die rol van onderwysers in so 'n instansie?

J: Kyk, my man sê altyd jy kry daardie onderwysers wat gaan leer om met kinders te werk om 'n inkoms te hê vir hulle lewe. Dan kry jy daardie onderwysers wat gaal van die lewe af om die kinders te leer. So dit is nie net eenige eens se werk om met die kinders te werk nie. Dit is baie belangrik om involved te wees²³ [Janet, p. 6].

The journey that families make in search of a better life is often filled with peril and hardship. Through the help and understnading of the Practitioner, this family was able to obtain legal status in South Africa. The Practitioner assumed a primary role in assisting the family as she felt responsibilty towards the children and their family to do what she could to ease their transition into a new county, a new city, a new community and a new early childhood environment.

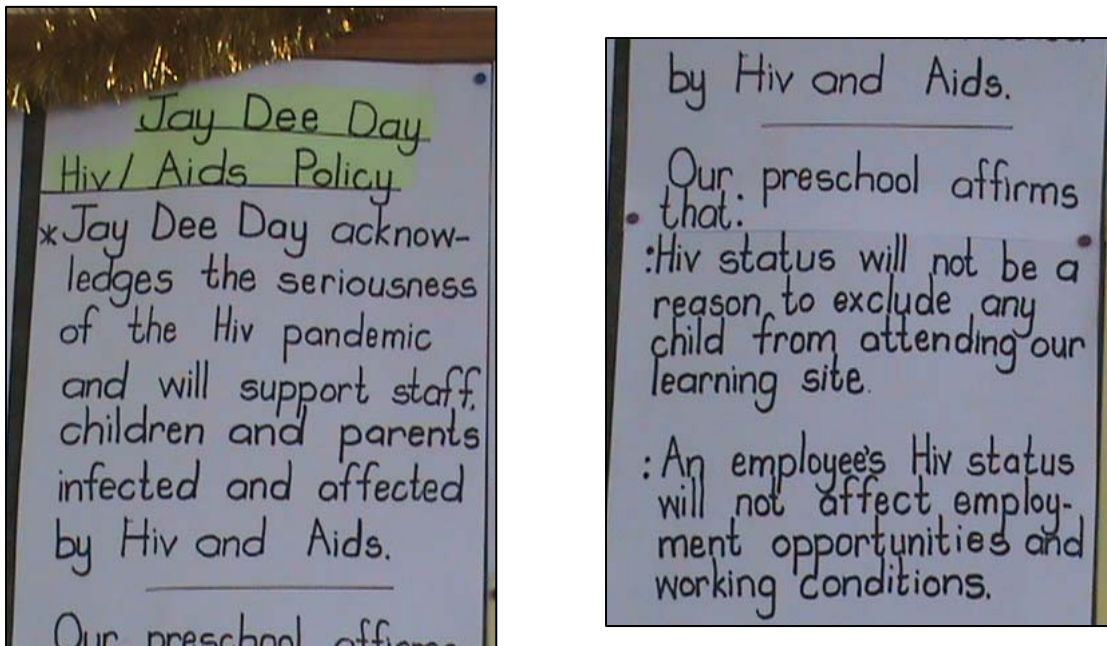
Other types of diversity that the Practitioners alluded to included children with special needs, gender diversity, as well as children with HIV/AIDS. Three Practitioners mentioned that these play an important part in social integration within the ECD setting. Although these three factors do not directly form part of this study, it is acknowledged that they are an important aspect of any intervention looking at how to foster social integration in the classroom. Due to the continuing stigma against HIV/AIDS, this is particularly difficult hurdle to overcome. Most families will not inform the centre should the children have HIV/AIDS in case they are excluded from the centre. To counter this,

²³ J: I think that these two children must get frightened wherever they go because did you see how close they sit to each other at the same table? I have tried to seperate them, but then he says "I want to sit by my i-sister", and she by him. They are really and truly brother and sister. They don't want to sit apart. The parents explained to us how they got into the country. How she, the mother, tells me, they walked and walked until they crossed the border. And then they had to get into a taxi once they had crossed the border. That is so much for these young children to go through, with the man, the woman and the children...it is very dangerous! We have a close relationship with the police, and one day a policeman came to give us a talk so that the children would not be afraid of them...and he discovered that they [the Angolans] were here...and he gave them advice as to how they must apply for the right papers from home affairs, and now they have it. He helped them a lot to get the certificates.

R: And what do you think is the Practitioners role in such a case?

J: Look, you will always get those Practitioners that study to work with children n order to earn and income. Then you get those Practitioners who belief it is their calling to work with the young ones. It is not work meant for any type of person. It is imperative that Practitioners get involved and help wherever they can [Janet, p. 6].

some centres have adopted an HIV/AIDS policy which states that they will not discriminate against an infected child, parent or Practitioner.



An example of an HIV/AIDS policy displayed on the notice board at an ECD centre in Queenstown. Photographs taken by Jaclyn Murray

Although not all of the Practitioners have a policy regarding HIV/AIDS, they all stated that HIV/AIDS must not be used as a means to discriminate against anyone:

And then there is HIV/AIDS...one cannot label children who are sick. The children need to learn about what this is from young, otherwise if they meet someone when they are older then they will not accept that child...they will always tease the child, the child will cry "they don't want to play with me, they hate me", things like that [Thandi, p. 8].

5.2 Teaching diversity: 'The food must be cultural'

Since cultural identity was largely based on the physical appearance of the students, it appeared that Practitioners see culture as something quite superficial and

static. On further investigation it seemed that cultural activities such as special traditions and festivals, especially traditional food and dress, were the main feature when teaching the children about cultural diversity. When asking how the Practitioners address integration in South Africa in their classroom, the following responses were received:

Sometimes we do a cultural day...I bring them clothes from different cultures...I used to go door to door asking people to lend me the stuff, other even gave me the stuff...I even asked my children to ask their white friends to borrow me the stuff. And I used to ask my colleagues to help me cook the different dishes and then we would have an open day, we would invite parents to observe and all that stuff. And the result when they are playing you would hear someone saying 'I am a white girl, I am going to speak English and they will speak it' [Janet, 1].

...so when you do a cultural, or heritage day or so, then you must try and let the diverse group of children taste the different types of food, or maybe dress up for the day [Lizaan, p. 2/3].

We have a cultural week at the beginning of the year where parents are invited to come and talk to the kids about their different cultures, religions etc. They also bring sweet things which are typical from their culture for the kids to try [Isabel, p. 1].

...ek vertel storiëtjies...dit is nou nog moelik vir die kinders om dit te grasp want ons het dit nou nie hier in die klas nie...maar ons kyk vir die kos en die dress...en ons praat oor disabilities, that as well...maar kyk so ek gesê het, dit is net vir hulle...hulle doen dit nou net nie...so ons probeer om dit oor te dra²⁴ [Sara, p. 2].

I bring things from my own culture to school...I made roti's one day and that was lovely...and I often brings music from my own culture, and clothing and stuff... I can introduce my own culture to them but I can't do much from their own culture...even though we try to include, even Muslims, I don't know much about them – I am Hindu, and they are Muslims [Adele, p. 10].

Dan moet 'n mens maar kom plat praat met hulle... “die swart man, en die bruin man en die wit man”. Dit is mos maar al drie wat ons nou op die oomblik met hulle kan gebruik. Maar wat ons weer doen, wan ons oor die swart man praat dan bring ons in die pap en die wors en almal bring ons wat hulle gewoonlik eet. En dan het ons die Muslims ook gebruik, wat hulle eet, wat hulle dra, hulle

²⁴ ...I tell stories...it is still difficult for the children to grasp because we don't have that much diversity in the classroom...but we look at the food and the dress...and we speak about disabilities, that as well...but look, like I said, they don't experience that much diversity...so we try to put it across to them [Sara, p. 2].

*traditioneele kleren...en dan het ek noe so kleren gehad wat die swart mense gewoonlik dra, en dan het die juffrou dit vir hulle aangetrek*²⁵ [Khaya, p. 3].

Practitioners follow what Mac Naughton (2006) identifies as the Cultural Understandings approach, focusing their efforts on teaching children about cultural diversity using certain cultural traditions (such as food and dress), often resulting in enforcing certain cultural stereotypes and associations. These activities regarding culture are also most often given a set timeframe, be it one of the many themes focused on during the school year, a day on the calendar such as Heritage day, or a weekend festival of celebrating cultures.



A young girl wears a traditional African cloth.
Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray



A poster representing the cultural dress of different groups.
Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray

²⁵ One must speak straight talk to them... “The black man, and the brown man, and the white man”. These are the only three that we can talk to them about at this age. But what we also do is when we are talking about the black man then we also bring in the meat and potatoes [food], and everyone brings in what they normally eat. And then we also use the Muslims, what they eat, what they wear, their traditional clothing...and then I also have the clothes that the black people usually wear, and then the Practitioner puts it on for the children [Khaya, p. 3].

Only one Practitioner demonstrated the need to draw on the normal daily life on the children when talking about cultural differences or similarities, although she feels that the necessary resources are not always available:

Most centres celebrate on Heritage day and then think that they are dealing with diversity, and yet that is just a day on the calendar...At my centre we invite an old lady or an old man from the community to come and talk about culture in a different way, however, there are not always people from the other cultures who can explain their culture to the children [Joy, 5]].

It was found that the Practitioners interpretation of the concept of culture is closely linked to how they believe young children perceive difference. The following anecdote which I heard from a talk I attended by the Premier of the Eastern Cape Province, Nosima Balindlela, illustrates how half of the Practitioners perceived children's awareness regarding diversity.

My daughter, who is black, went home with a friend one day, a young white child who had a dog. Upon arrival at the front gate my daughter saw the dog and was scared. After informing her friend of her fear, she received the following response: "Thandi, don't worry, the dog only bites black people".

While the young friend recognized that there was a group of people called 'blacks' whom her dog did not favour, it had escaped her that her friend Thandi was actually part of this group. This notion that children don't see colour is reinforced by four of the Practitioners who participated in this study.

They don't even know difference about colours. It doesn't matter to them [Lizaan, p. 4].

Kids don't see colour and it is really wrong to try and instil that in them artificially...to brainwash them [Joy, p. 3].

But children don't know the difference between black and white until they are taught it.....Then we were looking at Mandela and his friends...they know that Mandela was in prison. So what happened when they heard that when Mandela was a young boy he was always with his white friend, going together, doing things together, so my children would say "Is Mandela's friend a white person?"...and I

said “yes, white people are like us, you know, black people and all people they must grow, love and respect each other” [Thandi, p. 5].

At this age that is what is so nice – there is not racism. It makes no difference who you are, we love you anyway [Beth, p. 7].

Although the children might not have seen their friends as different to themselves, many children still employed the terminology “Black”, “white”, “too dark” and so forth when referring to other children who they were not friendly with, or in the following example, even to the Practitioners.

...And then we had a very interesting thing...a little girl whose mother was a doctor who was here for a term. And she would call us “Umlungu”... “Come umlungu”...and I don’t know if it derogatory or not...there are sort of two camps...but I heard that was like the white scum on the sea, when the sea washes out that white foam. But whether it’s derogatory or not, it is not exactly a polite way to address people...but she would always say to us “umlungu!” [Sue, p. 4].

I have come across somebody making statements like “but you are black” or “you are white”...that I have come across. What I simply did in that situation was to say that “well you know, it doesn’t really matter what colour we are, we are all the same, and its crazy that it doesn’t mean that you can’t do this [based on your colour] [Isabel, p. 2].

The Muslim children we had here were very racist. Not all, but there were certain children who wouldn’t play [with black children], and would say, “He is black” or “he is very black...” You know there are also categories of ‘blackness’... “he is a very black child” or “he is not like me, he is very black”. So they definitely categorize according to degrees of blackness. Even the black children [Adele, p. 3].

A few Practitioners believe that children are very aware of the reality in which they are living. A Practitioner working at a centre in an economically poor community had the following to say:

Children are definitely aware of what is going on around them...like here, they live in a harsh reality...and it manifests in their games. You know, it is also a lifestyle...filled with guns and I tell you, they know the names of all the types of guns, they know the language. So that’s a big problem... [Sara, p. 4].

What appears to be a common occurrence in children's awareness is that they do not necessarily see the differences between themselves and people whom they are close to. However, they are aware that differences exist – and often in general, stereotypical ways. The following anecdote from Sue best represents this dichotomy:

I had a little girl called Annie in my class. She was the loveliest child and the children loved Annie. They were transfixed by her hair, and she was really part of the classroom no problem. And they never treated her any differently. But when Annie's nanny came one day with her little brother Bobby, they [the children in the class] shrieked with laughter and they said "Look! Annie's brother's a China!" But they had never seen her as Chinese. But when they saw her parents, or her siblings, they recognized immediately that they were Chinese.

R: And did they treat her any differently after that?

S: No, she was Annie. And she was part of their community. But they could see that her family was Chinese. Now that fascinated me. Because when you know someone as a friend, you no longer see their colour. And that is why it is so important for people to actually get to know each other on a personal level, because you no longer see colour. And that was for me a very strong illustration of that [Sue, p. 4].

5.3 'White parents keep their kids separate'

We began the discussion on cultural diversity in ECD centres noting that race is the marker most used as the yardstick by which to measure cultural diversity among students. This is hardly surprising if one considers that in none of the centres visited in Queenstown, and only one centre visited in Cape Town had white children enrolled. So where do these children go? As Joy, an Afrikaans speaking white woman, pointed out in her statement which serves as the heading for this paragraph, in Queenstown white parents send their children to a select few centres. This was confirmed by Thandi, who stated that she had white children attending her school until they were removed by their families and placed elsewhere on account that her school had become too 'Black'. Upon further investigation it was found that in Queenstown the English-speaking white children attend two main ECD centres: one is the Pre-Grade R and Grade R classes which are run by the former Model C²⁶ Junior primary school, while the other is a privately run

²⁶ Model C schools were, during apartheid, schools for whites only. While in the democratic South Africa this has fallen away, this term is still used to distinguish schools, as Former Model C schools tend to have

ECD centre located in a wealthy suburb of the town, where the majority of the children enrolled are white. The Afrikaans-speaking white children attend the Pre-Grade R and Grade R classes of the local Afrikaans public school. In Cape Town the same pattern seems to exist. The only centre in this study which had white children attending was located in the upper-middle class suburb, Hatfield. When questioning the Practitioners as to where white families send their children, they all agreed that it was predominantly to centres run by the former Model C schools in the wealthy suburban areas. As one Practitioner put in when talking about where the white parents said their children:

Oh yes! Those schools...well, the sun shines out of them. There is such preference and bias as to who gets in. Sorry to say, but if you are white you get into [these schools] without any problems. If you are Coloured, you will also get in. The Indians too. What they are trying to bring in but its not really working, is that they are saying that if you live in the area of the school they will take you first. Then they make another circle saying that the kids from these areas (further away) will be taken in thereafter and so on and so on. So it is very unlikely that your child will be accepted if you live in the informal settlements on the outskirts of the town. So that is what these schools are saying, they are saying "we are not racist" BUT... [Beth, p. 3].

Considering South Africa's history of land distribution and the fact that many suburbs close to such schools are home to mainly white families, and then middle-class Indian and Black African families, this is a highly problematic practice. At a different centre a Practitioner stated that she [herself white] feels that the white parents are the most racist and the best at keeping their kids separate from everyone else. She stated that she had a white parent come to talk to her about enrolling her child at the centre, and one of the first questions that the parent posed was "Are there a lot of black kids in the school?" The Practitioner informed the parent that she should not bother to enrol her child here as she refuses to take anyone who asks about whether the kids are black, white, pink or purple.

The general trend, supported by research on integration in schools post-apartheid, is that there has been an exodus of Black African, Asian and Coloured children to schools located in more economically wealthy areas, while white children have not moved. The white children, who have moved, have moved to independent schools which are very

better facilities than other government schools. These schools are now attended by the middle class of South Africa. http://schools.coe.ru.ac.za/wiki/Formal_Model_C_Schools

expensive. In conversation with three Practitioners working in a rural Eastern Cape community they all agreed that while they take their children to participate in activities ‘in town’ at former Model C schools, they are never visited by these schools and their pupils. These Practitioners believe that this is problematic as these students are therefore not even aware of the situation in the rural areas and very seldom get the opportunity to mix with other cultures. Furthermore, these Practitioners lamented their lack of a professional relationship with Practitioners from other cultural backgrounds. They believe that starting an association between both urban and rural educators from all backgrounds would greatly enhance the quality of the education that they provide for their students, especially as regarding understanding different cultural values, beliefs and knowledge systems.

5.4 ‘It’s in the mind, not the skin colour’: Values and attitudes

There was unanimous agreement among the Practitioners and the families about the importance role that values and attitudes play in relating to people. When questioned about the values and attitudes which they believe are important to foster social integration within a diverse setting the following were identified: empathy, respect for each other, be open to learn from others, acceptance, and understanding.

Although these were heralded as very important, it was acknowledged that currently in society other values and attitudes including discrimination, racism, prejudice and lack of understanding have taken hold and are more prevalent than the first set of values and attitudes described above.

Within the South African context, Practitioners felt that apartheid played a very pertinent role in breaking down value systems and encouraging mistrust and fear among people from differing cultures.

My father was a very racist man and we grew up with this, looking down at black people. And then after he left and after apartheid ended and everything, then I realized that this was not actually the way it was meant to be. We need to respect each other and be honest with each other because we live together” [Joy, p. 2].

I think they are angry because they are older people [from 40 years upwards] who come from the apartheid era. They don't like much of these things because where they come from there is a lot of...there is anger, with the white man, because of the way they lived before...the older people. But we are trying to remove that from their minds, and all that stuff by doing this type of thing [Thandi, p. 7].

I would say that part of the problem we face is about a lack of respect. But I would say that people have come a long way, in terms of religion and especially in terms of race. But you still find those that...for example, when somebody phones you or you phone the company to complain, and a Black African person picks up, some people still think that "gee whizzes, now I am going to take forever to sort this out", and you know, you are going to take long but the thing is the patience in that, like how is anybody going to know if they don't learn [Isabel, p. 2].

Another challenge to instilling positive values in children is the xenophobia which has taken root in communities across the country, and which directly affects young children attending early childhood programmes. This was perhaps most forcefully driven home to me when, undertaking participant observation in an ECD classroom I heard a five-year old Congolese boy say to the Practitioner "My father says that he won't let me die". He made this statement a few days after the violent attacks against foreign nationals began in the city of Johannesburg and began to spread to other parts of the country. This young child along with his parents and younger twin siblings all have refugee status, having left their country to escape the very violence that now threatens the little that they have managed to build up in this new country which they now call home. The Practitioners who participated in this study identified that the xenophobia being displayed across the country poses a dire problem for social integration.

I think there are problems...all the people are coming to South Africa now...from other countries. It's always in the newspaper about all the people coming from other African countries...all of them [Khaya, p. 1].

Like I said about the attacks that we have seen here in Alexandra...there is a need for programmes to talk about diversity. It is scary that one [the attacks]...eh, it is scary. Especially just look at the fact that in South Africa...I mean, last night I was watching a programme where they were talking about being African...and so I might be a Xhosa, and someone might be a Sotho, how would you differentiate those two? Would you differentiate them because of their attire? Or would you

*listen to what language they speak? It is scary because at the end of the day you are just killing someone of your own blood...whether he is black from Nigeria, Zimbabwe, or even London, because we do have black people everywhere, white people everywhere. So it's sick. I don't know what's going on here in South Africa now. It is happening in Cape Town and Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth...and now it is going everywhere...everywhere. Where are they supposed to run too? Who will protect them? I don't know who...someone from these Parliament people, someone was talking about protecting these people, like the Zimbabweans. But there is no hope because as he is talking about protecting people the only protection that he can offer them is to take them to the police stations. What else? And are there enough places in the police stations to accommodate them...the thousands and thousands. And it's not right because South African's they **do** go to other countries...and they are welcomed, you see...they are welcomed. We have a big problem of a lack of understanding here in this country...understanding is the key [Thandi, p. 2/3].*

Most of the Practitioners believe that children attain their values and attitudes predominantly from the family and the home environment. Practitioners noted that many of the children in their care are quite open about what they are being taught at home. Seven Practitioners acknowledged that there are sometimes clashes in the classroom due to different values being taught at home and at the centre, as well as differences in values between cultures.

...they [values] differ among the different cultures. For example you can see that with a Coloured and with someone else...what he learns at home and what we learn at home is not the same. So when I say something, then he says 'no, but we don't do that at home'. At the same time the other one says 'but my mommy says that we must do it like that'. So there is a clash and that happens sometimes here in the school.

Researcher: And how do you deal with that?

I say, ok, you said we must do it like this so lets do it your way and then after that we do it the other way. So we do it both ways and then they understand why we do it like that. It is very important to respect each other, to respect each others cultures, to learn from one another, and also behaviour. To really respect each other's feelings [Janet, p. 3].

The attitudes that parents have definitely does affect the children...for example, if a parent says that a child cannot play with such and such a friend because he is a different colour then the children are very clever, they will come to school and tell me 'look, my mommy said that I mustn't play with so and so' etc. It all depends on how the parent is...but if a parent is teaching the child that we are all the same or

to respect difference, then you will see it in the child...you can see the difference [Lizaan, p. 4].

I think that it is very important that there is coherence between the two [centre and home]...because if you look at it the child's spends more time and school, and that is where more learning takes place. But it's very easy to confuse a child. And if they hear a different opinion at home they are sure to come and tell you know matter how the parent tries to convince them that they didn't hear that opinion. And I feel that if you as a family can be open and open-minded towards other cultures and races your child can benefit from it so much easier because technically looking at it in two years time there is going to be a difference. And it's changing all the time [diversity increasing and changing] [Isabel, p. 6].

Another Practitioner, Joy, stresses how the values and the attitudes that the families hold are the primary factor affecting how the children grow up and view diversity in our society. She stressed the fact that families do not instil the values of respect and understanding in their children, and that they [the children] have no other way to learn this. Families are therefore seen as an imperative model for their children, and if families display racist, xenophobic, discriminatory or stereotypical values or attitudes towards a culture or a religion for example, children can be seriously affected. Only two Practitioners noted the direct influence of Practitioners on the values and attitudes that children hold.

I think that if teachers have a negative attitude, the children will be negative. But if the teachers are positive then the children will be positive. Like the families, the teachers must also set a good example from which the children can learn [Thandi, p. 5].

Young children are very perceptive; they are sensitive to the attitudes of their teacher [Sara, p. 6].

Expressing their beliefs regarding the absence of values and attitudes which foster healthy intercultural relationships within the South African context, all the Practitioners identified the need for a programme which can help them deal with this situation, and most importantly draw the families in alongside them.

We need be a specific programme because nobody knows what to do and if it is not made clear to the children they will grow up to be just like their parents and continue to fight each other. Maybe it could be like a theme. Even within cultures it is important because here the Ndabele's and the Thong's from Zimbabwe fight and then their children bring the fight to school and then the school has to deal with it. It is also important to help the children who come from fighting countries like the Congo as they have that anger in them which you don't see in the children who come from peaceful countries like Cameroon [Thandi, p. 8].

It is important to have a programme, but so far nobody has thought about making one. If we can help the children understand that it doesn't matter if we are Sotho/Zulu/Mozambican or whatever but that the important thing is we are all black, then maybe they won't grow up fighting each other like their families. In South Africa people have no morals and no values, so their attitudes are all wrong to other people [Khaya, p. 3].

It is very, very important to have a programme. Now we had this ugly xenophobia thing and if something is not done it will go even further into tribalism and who knows what else. It is very important not to exclude people and for people to learn that nobody lives in a bubble [Isabel, p. 4].

Having identified that Practitioners feel that there is a need for the implementation of a specific programme which can help guide them in teaching children about cultural diversity, and which directly involves the families of the children, the next step is to identify what is currently happening in the classrooms. In other words, what strategies and sources of knowledge are Practitioners making use of to foster social integration, which they believe is fundamental to developing a cohesive society.

5.5 Knowledge and strategies

Although all the Practitioners identified that a programme dealing with cultural diversity is much needed in early childhood development programmes, a large proportion of the Practitioners acknowledged that they currently do very little in relation to cultural diversity. None of the Practitioners have a specific programme in place to deal with cultural diversity and social integration. However, they make use of different strategies to teach children about diversity which include having a 'culture table' (see photograph below), a poster of Africa that one Practitioner displays in her classroom (see photograph

A poster representing the diversity of people living
on the African continent.
Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray



Perhaps the most widespread strategy employed in early childhood programmes, and the most contested, has to do with mother-tongue instruction. It is well understood and accepted that a solid grounding in language that is well known is essential for the cognitive, affective and social development of young children. This is not to say that young children cannot learn more than one language, rather, problems arise when mother-tongue instruction is abandoned too early and replaced with a language of a higher status.

According to the Practitioners, this is common practice in most early childhood classrooms. Although English was not the language of the majority of children or Practitioners in the centres, it was employed and imposed in most of them as the language of learning and teaching. There seem to be three main reasons for this: 1.) The Practitioner does not speak the language of the majority of the children, 2.) The diversity present in the classroom calls for the use of a common language and 3.) Families insisting that their children learn English.

Amongst the Xhosa families English is highly valued. Because English is an international language, we are teaching our kids to go out there and work. You know, my kids like English more than Xhosa you know, they are very good in English more than isiXhosa...and the families like that a lot because they are learning at an early age...and they appreciate that [Khaya, p. 8].

Even though I am Afrikaans and my children are a mix of Xhosa and Afrikaans speaking, we use mostly English. They are all very good with English and they speak predominantly English amongst themselves, a little Afrikaans...We have a Somalian boy in the class, and some from other African countries, but he can speak English. The families are so excited about them learning English [Joy, p. 5].

I used to have Coloured children in my classroom last year. They spoke some Xhosa but I had to use English, because I couldn't talk to them in Afrikaans...because the other children don't know the words in Afrikaans, but English they do understand a little [Thandi, p. 2].

In light of this it is not surprising that when questioned about the strategies that they employed in order to socially integrate children in their classrooms, many stated that they adopted English.

Yes, we use English as a common language. The principal is able to speak all the languages of the children so can help them if they get stuck. We focus on what is the same for all of us. Some of the families come and tell the children stories about their culture [Joy, p. 3].

Yes, we speak English but we do try to help the children in their own languages with the little bit that we know. We also tell the children about each others languages and why it sounds different [Janet, p. 2].

We speak English as the common language. It is also critical when you employ teachers to mix their cultures for the sake of the children so the programme can be balanced [Sue, p.5].

In most instances the Practitioners were aware that the children were not fluent in English and required assistance in understanding what was being said. The Practitioners often employed strategies such as asking the Principal for assistance in translating, as well as the cleaning staff or administrative staff. However, during Participant Observation I came across a situation which indicates the extreme to which employing English in an ECD classroom, where not one child is an English mother-tongue speaker, can be taken. In this classroom children are only aloud to speak English. During free play the Practitioner constantly warned the children to stop speaking isiXhosa and to speak in English. Comments from the Practitioner such as “*Unfortunately they go straight into their mother-tongue all the time*” and “*I am not saying throw isiXhosa out the window, but in the same breathe I am saying please do so*”, indicates that she finds it very challenging to work in a multilingual setting and has therefore resorted to implementing strategies which could in fact harm the children in her care. Furthermore, this attitude can result in children devaluing their own mother-tongue and seeing English as the language with higher status.

The strategies which Practitioners are derived from the knowledge gained through training as well as lived experience. In most cases the Practitioners felt that training had helped them to greatly improve their ECD knowledge in general and to become more effective Practitioners who can offer better quality care to young children. However, as regards training on cultural diversity, the Practitioners felt that very little had been covered during their training.

We did something on multiculturalism...it was a small module...and we also looked at something on multilingualism [Janet, p. 4].

In our training we looked at not being biased...we did a module on Anti-Bias. That is what I learnt about [Beth, p. 4].

We learnt that we have to have the three languages [English, Afrikaans, isiXhosa] for our Grade R practical. When you set up your classroom, because in Grade R children start recognizing names and things of literacy, so for example when you put the labels up in the classroom for tables, you had to have them in three different languages. We touched on Anti-Bias... [Isabel, p. 3].

I learnt that I must respect it. [Thandi, p. 5].

Ja, ons het iets daarvoor gedoen... ons het nou mos daar geleer van die kos soorte, en tradisioneele klere, en dan het ons ook geleer in wat plek kry jy die meeste van daai soort stam. En van lande het ons ook bespreek, en dan die tradisie's soos ons het xmas. Soos die Muslims, hulle het mos nou...wat het hulle nou? Ramadaan of ietsie so...²⁷[Sara, p. 8].

We look at cultural diversity very tangentially. There is a whole section on making sure that you have stories that are intercultural...having our jigsaw puzzles that have different racial groups. So there is stuff on the stories and the equipment, like dolls....more materials and resource focused [Sue, p. 10].

Although Practitioners recieved little training on how to successfully manage cultural diversity in an ECD classroom, four Practitioners referred to how they benefitted from the experience of being part of a culturally diverse class during training, which opened their eyes to challenges that arise in pluricultural contexts, and how these might be addressed.

In our class we talked about rural areas and how people living there don't understand us, and we don't understand what they are talking about...and that we must speak more English, because they can understand more English. But we were quite a mixed group also so they told us what to do when we go to rural

²⁷ Yes, we did do something about that...we learnt about the different types of food, and traditional clothing, and then we also learnt about in which places one finds the most people from each tribe. And we also spoke about different countries, and the traditions such as Christmas. Like the Muslims, they have...what is it they have? Ramadan or something like that [Sara, p. 8].

areas only with black people, what must we do to talk to them. Yes, we learnt a lot [Sara, p. 8].

Being part of a diverse classroom helped me very much, especially on a practical level because we went out to communities and talked to different people...coloured people and black people, and they then gave us practical ways to do it [work in multilingual classrooms]...for example I can say something in English and then repeat it in Afrikaans, and they teach us how to repeat it in Xhosa...so we try to use the three languages, yes, but with some of the stuff we struggle there with the Xhosa words [Janet, p. 11].

I undertook my own Level 4 training in a diverse classroom which also helped me understand cultural differences between people and this helped me in my own classroom [Lizaan, p. 3].

Hulle is fantastish, onse het Xhosa, Kleurlinge...verskillende kulture...en weet jy, wan hulle ons vra dat ons 'n demonstrasie maak van die morning ring en so iets, they have some nice songs...with rythm and so all. En so onse lecturer het vir ons gesê dat sy gaan vir die Xhosa vrouens vra om hierdie songs neer te skryf en sy het dit uitgeprint en nou het elke een van onse so 'n lekker boekie...en Afrikaans met die Engles en die Xhosa²⁸ [Sara, p. 4/5].

The experience of learning alongside people from diverse backgrounds enhanced cultural exchange and understanding. It appears that these experiences greatly contributed to the Practitioners taking issues of diversity into account, and that being able to move beyond the 'theory' espoused in the training curriculum opened their eyes and their minds to other ways of being, of seeing things, and of experiencing. Lived experience therefore plays a significant role in the Practitioners understanding of, and teaching about, cultural diversity. Training alone cannot substitute the experience of learning through interaction. As one Practitioner emphatically stated:

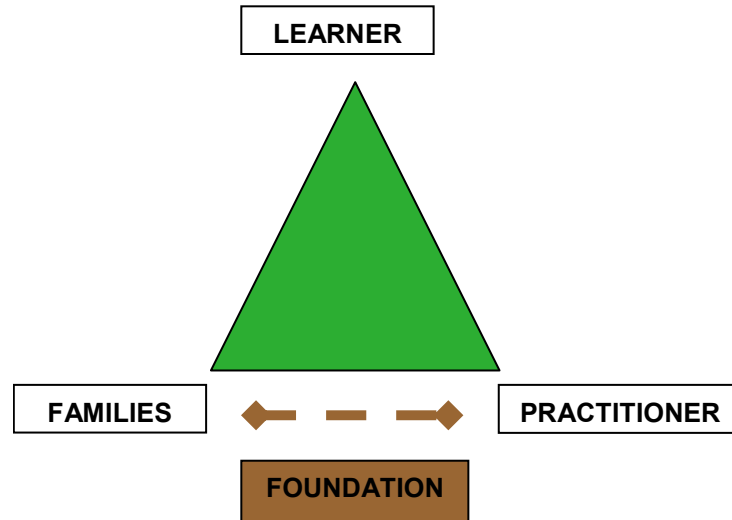
Cultural diversity...it is the way you think, that is what I believe, it is not the programme that teaches you...it is the way you think. If you are thinking negatively then you feel you are going down and down. If you think that no, everything is fine, then good. It is not that the course will equip you or not...it is the way that you think [Adele, p. 7].

²⁸ They were fantastic, we had Xhosa, Coloureds...different cultures...and you know what, when they were asked to do a demonstration of a morning ring and so forth, they had some nice songs...with rhythm and so all. So our Trainer asked the Xhosa women to write these songs down and she printed out copies of these great little books...in Afrikaans, English and IsiXhosa [Sara, p. 4/5].

Finally, an idea expressed by a number of the Practitioners was that although training on managing cultural diversity in early childhood development centres would be very beneficial and is, they believe, an integral part of the training programme, Practitioners also need to take their knowledge into their own hands and actively source information to assist them with the challenges they face. Various sources were identified as being able to provide information with regard to this, such as talking to fellow Practitioners and families, doing research in the local library and carrying out small scale surveys in their centres and communities to identify the most pressing challenges being faced. However, in most instances Practitioners do not have access to quality materials and resources and have to travel long distances to access them. Technology is scarce and most of the Practitioners are not familiar with how to source information using the internet and so forth. These Practitioners are therefore almost entirely dependant on the training they receive as a source for resources to increase their knowledge base and enhance their classroom practice.

5.6 The three-legged pot: the child, the family and the Practitioner

The second objective of this research study was to analyse what factors facilitate or inhibit communication between Practitioners and families in a pluricultural context. From the findings outlined thus far, it is understood that the Practitioners believe that family involvement in the ECD setting is vital to run a successful programme. One Practitioner used the image of a three-legged pot, which is a very common cooking utensil used in South Africa, to illustrate to the researcher how she saw this relationship. She stated that if one of the legs of the pot was not there, then it would not be able to stand up straight and would cease to be of any use. In the same way, should the family or the Practitioner not be working together for the benefit of the child, the attempt to provide high quality care and educational opportunities for the child would be ineffective. Another Practitioner illustrated her idea of this relationship using a triangle, stating that the child must be on top while the family and the Practitioner form the foundation at the bottom, which supports the child's learning experiences.



Other Practitioners stressed the importance of the Practitioner-family relationship in the following ways.

There needs to be understanding between the families and the teacher and so I try to speak to them on a regular basis. Because I can see when the child is sad, I know the child is sad, or when the child is sick I can see that, and then I can say to the parents that today so and so didn't look well, or your child was a bit unhappy or your child said this to me...then the parents can know. I have a young girl in my class whose parents are going through a bitter divorce and the only place that the father can see his daughter is at school, which he does for a short while everyday. When the problems started I could see that there was a change in her so the parents came to me and told me that they are going through difficulties, and all that. It's also very important with regards to sharing ideas with each other. By communicating with one another then I know how to handle that child [Lizaan, p. 2].

I think that family involvement is very important. You know a child then feels that my child cares about what I am doing. And I think that is important from a very early age, because if you look at your high school, how many families actually stay involved in their children's lives? Where if it starts from now, it will be a norm by the time the child gets to High School...the idea that the families have to be involved. And I think in today's society that it is imperative that families are involved whether it is at primary school level or at High School level [Isabel, p. 4/5].

I can see that there is a connection. It is important that the teachers and the families have a good understanding in order to help the child [Thandi, p. 7].

Dit is baie belangrik in ECD. En nou weet die familie presis...as hulle kind 'n probleem het, for example met leterkuns, dan gesels ek en sy, en dan kyk ek en sy wat kan ons doen omtrent die probleem...moet sy 'n bietjie verder gaan of is dit nie nodig nie want in die later stadium sal die kind daaraan gewoont raak? So die familie weet presis wat omtrent daai kinder se letering aangaan²⁹ [Janet, p. 3].

I believe that it is very important that families are involved in the ECD programmes that we run. I really feel that to be involved starts now, when your child is so young. The family needs to be aware who their kids are playing with, see what is happening at the centre, see what is going on...because then the foundation is already laid. But with the foundation phase, you need to be involved in your child's education. Because in that time you as a family are teaching your child how to learn at home, what is happening. It is your responsibility to add on to what the teacher has done during the day. I mean look at Salim, I know that his mom and dad work with him at home. They are both involved in the parent-teacher association. They are involved with his work, they are involved with him and Salim is fine...he knows exactly what is going on. While Liko, my poor Liko, the little boy sitting next to you when we were singing. He is a very sweet boy, and he has got a lisp...I spoke to the family last year about it, and I spoke to the family again this year about it. They have done absolutely nothing about it. The father is a principal of another school somewhere, so he is an educated man. That poor little boy, I feel so sorry for him. His lunchbox comes here so, so dirty. I try to get hold of his parents and you cannot get hold of them. You try and phone them, you leave messages on their phones. They don't come to any PTA's...they don't come to any fundraising...they don't come to anything. Even last year at the graduation and the concert, they weren't here [Beth, p. 11/12].

Beth's story about the two boys in her class suggests the difference in the education experience of these two young children, in a large part owing to the involvement of the families, or in the case of Liyema, the serious lack thereof.

Having established that a successful learning experience for the child relies on the commitment and involvement of the family and the Practitioner, it is important to explore to what extent the families seem to actually be involved in the programme. Family involvement, as one Practitioner stated, is not only about involving one family member. The idea is not to have a 'representative' from each household come to the meetings and participate in organised activities (although this could be a good start). The objective is,

²⁹ It is very important in ECD. And now the families know very well...if their child has a problem, for example with literact, then we can discuss it and decide what do about this problem...must much more be done now, or will the child catch up later on? So the families know exactly what is going on with that child [Janet, p. 3].

rather, to promote the idea of a ‘family-school’ whereby the family gets involved and takes a genuine interest in the educational experience of their child.

The extent of family involvement differed between the centres, however, the majority of the Practitioners felt that family involvement needs to be improved as the centre cannot only be seen as a place where children learn English or where families pay fees and therefore feel exonerated from any responsibility regarding their children’s education. One Practitioner pointed out that family involvement differs across cultural groups.

African families are much more involved than Indian ones. I did not even see one Indian family coming to the parents’ meeting. Maybe once or twice I sometimes see them [in the street etc.]. They really only come to drop the child and pay the school fees, or comment on when they want something. Even though we host our parent-teacher meeting after 5pm, and most of them they have a shop and can close at 5pm and come... they don’t attend. There is nothing from the Indian side, but from the African side, even the man will come to the meeting [Adele, p. 11].

Other Practitioners stated that families occasionally assist with making classroom materials, and some participate by becoming members of the centre’s governing body. At the centre located in an upper middle class suburb in Cape Town, the families seemed to be most involved, providing transport for excursions, helping at fundraising events and drawing on “stay-at-home moms” to come and hold a hotdog day each Friday. There is also a parent committee which is responsible for organising events and activities where families can interact and get to know each other. The aim of this centre is to make it feel like a family according to the Practitioner working here, and she believes that they are succeeding in this. She stresses that communication is key to building the relationships between families and Practitioners. To illustrate this point she told the following story:

I think here at this school our communication is very good with the families and we therefore have fewer problems. Child support really flows throughout the school...we make it sort of like this is a family. Like there was a Grade R boy whose baby sister passed away. And the Principal put the information about the memorial service up on the door, and there were a whole lot of families who went to the service to give their support. Those types of actions really mean a lot. It’s like a community here...families drop their kids off and like that father you saw, sit on the carpet and read a story with their children before going off to work...we

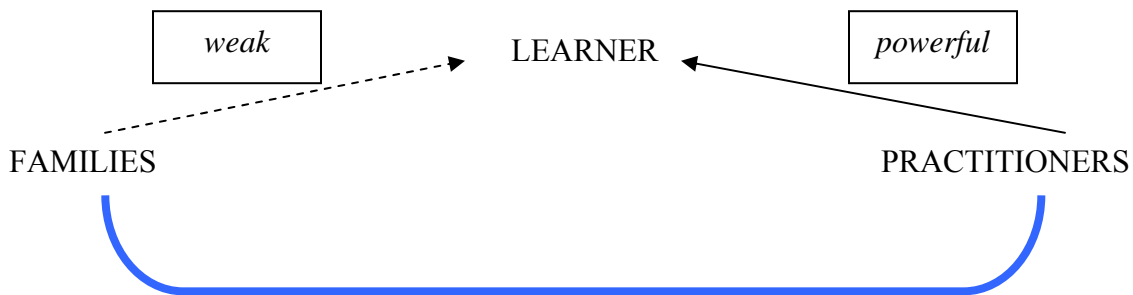
really encourage that sort of thing. And I think that is why we don't open that early. You can drop your child from 7.20am, when there is not a rush, because if you work in town and are not on the road by 7.20am, you are going to be late anyway [Isabel, p. 6].

Oh yes, their involvement is imperative, as is communicating with them. The thing is, you need to involve the families in a preschool...the families need to be involved...that is the biggest thing. That is what I find important. What I used to do when I used to do the baby class, in the second term I would call the families...each family...to come and see me in the afternoon. And we would sit with them for about an hour, and I would stimulate the families, show them how to stimulate their children at home. I would teach them...and I would sit and physically play games with them. This one mother, she was a nurse, would sit playing different games, and I would explain that this game will develop this and this and this, and you are using your clothes pegs at home. You don't need to go and buy expensive games, show the children how to use the clothes pegs, and I showed them about four or five different games they could play just using clothes pegs. And this mother was beside herself saying "I did not know that! Oh my goodness!" and she brought out a pen and paper and she was writing and writing. After a while I was a little bit nervous you know because this mother just kept going and I said to her but this is not your first child...this is about your third or fourth child so what did you do with your other children?! And she responded, "no, but this one is going to be the right one!" So yes, I would sit sometimes and hour, hour and a half, teaching the families first. And I would say, this is what I am doing with your child here at school, please do it at home. After that, with many families I could see the difference...from the first term after speaking to the families and then after that...how the child developed and improved [Beth, p. 8/9].

In communities where poverty is rife, Practitioners noted that time was an important factor which inhibited family involvement in the centre, with families working long hours and far away from home. Drinking problems and substance abuse also afflicted families in these communities. Where family members are unemployed, Practitioners believe that many suffer low confidence and are not fully aware of the important role that they play in the education of their children.

An important question that is to be considered at this point is what exactly are we drawing the families in for? Both families and Practitioners need to feel that there is value in this. Families need to understand that they are a valuable resource in any ECD programme, while Practitioners should find ways to draw from such a resource in creative and innovative ways. For example, in communities where poverty has taken a

hold, unemployed family members could be used as an excellent resource to enrich ECD settings as well as bring diversity into the classroom. One ECD specialist believes that using families is the best opportunity to “fill the gaps” in our education system and programmes, which brings great benefit to the children. However, the role of families is often undermined by both the Practitioners and the education system at large. The following diagram illustrates the way that the Practitioners felt about family involvement on a whole.



The blue line indicates the ‘missing link’ as one Practitioner called it, indicating the close tie between families and Practitioners which is often absent in the ECD setting. The broken line between families and learner represents the finding that families are often not aware that they are jointly responsible for the educational success of their children. Perhaps this comes from the past, in that being very involved in their children’s education does not fall within the frame of reference of some families, even though they themselves might be highly educated. The bottom line is that one cannot separate families and education and ways need to be found to incorporate them on an equal basis. This was succinctly put by Isabel:

I think it’s a 50/50 thing...from the Practitioners and the families. If the centre is willing to give the families the leeway, then they will be happy to help. And I think that if you give families something to do then they feel so much more appreciated, like...ok, you do notice the families here. So they find something that they would like to do for the school and they do it passionately because the school is allowing them so much [Isabel, p. 5].

5.7 Learning to communicate: Building the family – Practitioner relationship

According to the Practitioners, language and cultural differences were the two most important obstacles to building a solid relationship between themselves and the families of the children attending programmes. When asked about their experience of communicating with families from multilingual and pluricultural backgrounds, the Practitioners responded as follows:

I find it very difficult. When it comes to the family and the teacher...because, for example, when you write out a report, the family might say that "my child does know his colours", or "my child knows whatever", but when you are teaching them you see that the child doesn't understand what you are trying to tell him. And especially when it comes to news time or asking questions and they maybe know, or they are unable to answer you. So they do know a little bit of English, but they can't express themselves in their own way [Lizaan, p. 1]

One incidence off the top of my head was trying to explain to a mother about her child needing to see an occupational therapist, but they, the blacks, don't understand about occupational therapy...they don't understand that. They have never heard about it. Like this one mother, I have managed to get her to make an appointment for the child and they are going now on Wednesday. And she [the mother] is beside herself, because she believes that there is something dreadfully wrong with her child and now he has to go to this "funny" lady. And I am saying "no, she is just going to help you. She is just going to give him exercises and play with him and work with him just to help him to concentrate, help him to calm down, because he is also hyperactive, and he has a problem with listening...he CANNOT listen". His ears are fine, we have had his ears checked and there is nothing wrong with them. The problem is he switches off, and he doesn't listen. You can talk to him face to face, and he will look at you, turnaround and do exactly what you told him not to do. That's why he is going to occupational therapy. But how do I communicate this to the family? [Beth, p. 9].

Wan ek met die kleuterskool begin het dan kry mens daardie families wat sê, ons kom sit ons kinders hier by die creche... dit is jou verandwoordlikeit, vanaand kom haal ek my kind, klaar. Niemand kom ouer vergaandering toe nie...ek stuur 'n briefie, hulle reageer na die briefie, hulle stuur wat ek nodig het maar ek gaan nie met jou kom komunikeer by die kleuterskool nie³⁰ [Janet, p. 2].

³⁰ When I started the preschool there were families who would say, we are putting our children in the centre...it is your responsibility, tonight I will be back to fetch them, and finish. Nobody came to the parent-teacher meetings...I sent letters, they react to the letters and send what I am requesting from them, but they never came to communicate with me at the school [Janet, p. 2].

I find it very difficult to communicate to the families, especially to Imaad's parents who is Somalian and whose parents are Muslim. It is also the language barrier... The biggest problem is the language problem. Hopefully by the end of the year most of them will be able to understand a bit of English and to speak a little bit of English [Adele, p. 7].

It appears that although family involvement in most of the centres which were visited is lacking to a greater or lesser degree, a challenge over and above this includes differences in the home language of the families, as well as their cultural backgrounds. The challenge of drawing families in to become more involved in their children's education is intensified when families and Practitioners cannot communicate effectively, or when cultural beliefs, values and attitudes make it hard to come to an agreement as to the extent and type of involvement required or desired by the Practitioner or the families. The low self-confidence of the families, who speak different languages or hold cultural or religious beliefs different to the norm, can greatly augment the difficulty of getting them involved in the ECD setting. It is also necessary that Practitioners understand the reason for lack of family involvement and do not necessarily assume that it is due to a lack of interest in their children's educational experiences.

Faced with the challenge of drawing families into the ECD setting, some Practitioners have adopted various strategies which they believe to be effective. The Practitioners in Queenstown who were trained on the High/Scope Curriculum all mentioned home visits as the most effective way to glean insight in the home life of the children and their families, improve the lines of communication between the Practitioners and the families, and to encourage family involvement.

We were trained at Lesedi La Bana on High/Scope, so we know that we must have home visits, so that we can communicate better with the families. During these visits we can sit down and discuss any questions or comments that the family have, and those that we as Practitioners have...things that are negative and others that are positive...so that if there are any problems, it doesn't just stay there, instead we come up with solutions, together [Thandi, p. 2].

The house visits are crucial. Because you get to know the family and they see you, the Practitioner, in a different light, and they also see you in relation to their children. An interesting case was the sob saga about our doctor parent, Musa's mom. We had some issues with her last year and she actually said that "I don't want you in my house when I am not there". At the end of last term [when we

were planning a house visit], she wasn't going to be there and I said that's fine, we can be there if the nanny is there, because then at least he [Musa] will know that we have been there. Musa already wanted to know why everybody else had had a house visit and why didn't he?! She said "I actually don't want you when I am not there, I don't feel comfortable". We said no fine, we didn't push it and we went this year and it was such a success and she was so welcoming and she could see how we could relate to him and how much he enjoyed it, and it was such a positive experience. And so that was like a breakthrough you know, so I think the home visits just take things that one step further. It was what we were talking about earlier, unless you see people in a homely context, in a friendship context you don't go that deep....you don't ever really get to know or understand them better [Sue, p. 7].

...Talking about how the home visits help us understand the cultural background of the children and their families...I went to do a home visit with the families of a little girl called Meisha. Her father is Pakistani and his wife is Xhosa. However, she lives somewhere else and he lives on his own, but he had to get a male friend to come and stay there with us the whole time during the home visit. The father is Muslim and I presume that he had the friend come over so that he would not be alone with a woman. I noticed that this friend was there when I arrived and left the moment I did. So that was an interesting cultural experience, and a real eye opener. It helped me understand that having to communicate with a female Practitioner could, in such an instance, be a real challenge for this father [Adele, p. 4].

Furthermore, as one Practitioner stated emphatically, the children also benefit from the home visits:

Through the home visits the children see you with their family. It is important for them to see you working together, that the family and Practitioners are seen together as friends. I think that's very important. And that we are working together...that we are not somehow at loggerheads. So I think that the home visits are crucial [Sue, p. 7].

Other strategies that Practitioners said they employed in an attempt to foster improved communication between themselves and the families included organising fun weekend activities where the children and the families could interact with the Practitioner outside the programme setting. The Practitioner Janet took it upon herself to break the ice with the families by hosting a 'fun day' and through putting on a Christmas play with the children. She stated that since then the families have felt much more comfortable

communicating with her and she feels that their ECD centre is becoming like a real little community.

Ons het so 'n fun day gehad met jumping castles, ons het gebraai, en al die families moes kom, ek het vir hulle gesê dat dit is 'n moed dat hulle hierso moet wees. Ek het vir hulle almal kaartjies gegee wat hulle moes verkoop het, ek het dit R 10 gemaak, en die briefie het gesê dat hulle verpligting is om die kaartjies te koop of te verkoop...so dit is eintlich te se dat hulle moet hier wees. En daai dag het ons so jolly gegaan...ons het mekaar beter geleer ken, ons het gesels. Daardie dag het almal se persoonlikeede uitgekom, jy is nou maar comfortable, jy werk nie, en toe het ons begin daie band bou. Dit was alles informeel en die families waar baie comfortable. Toe het ons daai jaar vir onse Christmas play nie dit in 'n saal gehaad nie, ons het carols by candlelight hier buite gehaad, waar die kinders op dir patio ge"act" het, hulle Chrsitmas play het hulle hierso gehad, en die stoele was hierso op die gras en ons het potjies gemmak en weer gebraai...en dit was nou onse Christmas by candlelight, almal het kerse gehê en Christmas liedjies gesing. Iemand het gesê dat sy het nog nooit gedink dat so iets kan gebeur en 'n kleuterskool nie³¹ [Janet, p. 2/3].

5.8. Practitioner training programmes

The third and final objective of this study was to analyse how Practitioner training could be improved in order to provide Practitioners with the knowledge and strategies necessary to implement an intercultural educational programme in their respective ECD centres.

The Practitioners who participated in this study had been training according to the Learning Programmes of two different training organisations, namely the Cape Town Early Learning Centre and Lesedi La Bana. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS), which builds its Learning Outcomes for the General Education and Training Band for Grade R – 9, aims to develop the full potential of each learner as a citizen of a

³¹ We held a fun day with jumping castles, we braaied, and all the families were invited to come, in fact I told them that they were obligated to come. I gave them all raffle tickets to sell...in order for them to realise that they must attend. And we had such fun that day...we got to know each other better, we talked. That day everyone's personalities came out, you are comfortable, you aren't working, and so we began to build the close relationships. It was all informal and the families were very comfortable. And for the Christmas play that year we decided to not have it in a hall, but rather to sing carols by candlelight here outside, and where the children could act out their Christmas play. We set out chairs on the grass for the families and we made potjiekos and we braaied...and that was our Christmas by candlelight, everyone had candles and sang carols. Somebody still said that they would never have believed that something like this could take place at an ECD centre [Janet, p. 2/3].

democratic South Africa. In Grade R the Learning Outcomes are set according to three Learning Areas, namely Numeracy, Literacy and Life Skills. The Learning Programme which is designed in order to cover the Learning Areas and Outcomes specified by the RNCS is developed by each training organisation. These programmes are then accredited by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which ensures that the institution's curriculum meets all norms and standards as set out by the National Department of Education.

The CTELC followed a more traditional curriculum with one module presented on learning how to facilitate an inclusive educational environment in ECD settings. The expected outcomes of this module include

- 1.) To examine and challenge attitudes, biases and behaviours that create and maintain barriers to learning and development
- 2.) To critically explain the nature, causes and effects of significant barriers to learning and development in the ECD programme and community
- 3.) To create and maintain supportive networks with family, service providers and community organisations working with children experiencing barriers to learning and development
- 4.) To develop effective strategies to address barriers to learning and development in different ECD settings through a process of reflective practice.

These broadly defined expected outcomes are meant to be achieved through the aforementioned module, however, this module deals predominantly with issues pertaining to children with special needs, and does not sufficiently address diversity. The module entitled “Create and inclusive Anti-Bias Learning Environment in ECD Settings” was an elective module not used in this organisations training programme, and has recently been removed by the South African Qualifications Authority all together, the idea being that the content of this module is infused throughout the other modules on offer. This supports the finding that there is no coherent, specific programme which deals directly and in an in-depth manner with managing cultural diversity in the ECD setting.

The High/Scope curriculum, which Lesedi La Bana uses to train its Practitioners, is based on the concept of active participatory learning, which means that children have

hands-on experience with people, objects, events and ideas, and that their interests and choices are the centre around which early childhood programmes are organised. In the High/Scope approach, Practitioners are taught that having an array of materials that reflect the diversity of children's family lives is important. However, there is no specific module that deals with working in a pluricultural environment and assisting Practitioners with respecting diversity in their ECD centres.

Practitioners felt that it was important to have a diverse array of materials and resources in the centre which reflect diversity. There is a danger, however, that Practitioners believe that this is sufficient to promote respect for diversity and to enhance social integration in the centre. When asked about how they use materials and resources in relation to cultural diversity, the Practitioners replied as follows:

I think that materials and resources play an important part in fostering understanding about diversity ...it's a useful tool. I have this [she points to a handwritten poster which has the numbers 1, 2 and 3 and the underneath them written out in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa]. I also have the weather stuff in different languages...all the everyday stuff that the child uses... and then when I am busy teaching then I put it out and then when I am finished I put it away again [Lizaan, p.5].

I think materials and resources are useful for teaching people about diversity. We have different books and what we did last year was we invited a lady that came with different toys and things, and it was so fascinating because she had these dolls...but they had the African family...the white mom, the Coloured dad, the Black African grandfather and Coloured and white children, like all in one pack. And you can buy that. Because that is so nice for the doll corner...to sort of have this diversity. It is brilliant. And we also have books and stuff...I think that you as a Practitioner, when you are telling the children a story...your story illustrations...all the people in the story don't have to be Coloured, they don't have to be white and can be coloured in grey and black...it's all about how you feel, if you think out of the box [Isabel, p. 7/8].

We have story books in IsiXhosa, English and Afrikaans [Thandi, p. 7].

We have posters such as that alphabet [she points to an Arabic calendar hanging behind the door]. The Muslim children like to read it, but the other children don't even notice it. I remember once I brought camera instructions that were in Arabic, and they were absolutely thrilled with it. Because the writing goes back to front and everything. Also, we had some music and some Indian clothes and they were really happy to see that. They put it on and did those kinds of things which they usually see at home. But I am not sure about how the kids from the other

cultures feel. But those from the same culture, they look at these materials and they enjoy them, and they can point and read it all from top to bottom. But it is really nice to have different materials from the different cultures so that children will learn that ok, we don't only have this, they won't be limited to just one type of experience [Adele, p. 8/9].

I had a poster up in the classroom where I had "things I can do", with pictures of different children doing skipping etc. And I had one of the little Japanese or Asian children on the poster doing karate. And Annie walked into the classroom... You know we always think of the black-white thing so we make sure that we have a lot of black children and a lot of white children in illustrations. And she looked at the poster and she said "Look, look, there is a little china just like me!" And it just broke my heart, because I thought she was just one [one Chinese person in the school] but for her it was so important just the face and the "Just like me!" This experience illustrated to me the importance of having a diversity of illustrations, books in the centre...it is very important [Sue, p. 10/11].

There is general acceptance that materials and resources play an important part in exposing children to diverse cultural beliefs and practices. Both BEV and PAL acknowledged that children are aware, and greatly appreciate, having something in the centre with which they can identify, as was the case with Annie and the children whose home language was Arabic. These children are a minority in their respective ECD centres and the Practitioners acknowledged that the children's sense of belonging was definitely augmented by the inclusion of these materials in the ECD programme.

The training which the Practitioners participating in this study underwent might not have adequately prepared them for working in a culturally pluralistic context; however, the actual experience of training did provide them with greater insight regarding their work as Practitioners, and their role as both learners and educators.

The training I underwent changed me a lot. Because I was...how can I say... I was not like this before. For example, my behaviour changed. Before, I was not calm...I just panicked and I wanted everything to be in the right place...I don't want anything to be messed up and everything should be cleaned up nicely...but I am not like that anymore. It has also drastically changed the way that I interact with my own children. I wish that I had known about High/Scope before my children were born. It would have helped me a lot. I have learnt to actually listen to what my children are telling me, and I don't dominate everything. I am much more patient and relaxed with my children [Adele, p. 12].

En toe dink ek...ek gaan nou kyk as ek training doen, en toe leer ek dat jy moet dit doen en jy moet die kinders laat net kyk nie maar ook touch...en toe leer ek nou weer die life skills...ooh maar dit was nou 'n travel!...You know Alice in Wonderland? Dit het vir my so gewees...en dit is nou nog so! Rerig, dit is 'n nuwe wêreld wat ek nou ontdek. You know, en die boeke en die materials wat ons het en wat ons skryf, wat jy weer terug toe kan gaan en deur kyk. Soos dinge wat jy nie sometimes weet nie...soos jy kry daardie kind wat miskien skaam is, en daar was van my kinders wat skaam was, en ek het nie geweet hoe om vir hulle te handle nie³² [Sara, p. 8/9].

The role of the Trainer must also be acknowledged as imperative to the learning endeavour. The majority of the Practitioners noted that their Trainer was vital to their success on the training programme.

Ek het gekom en ek het gevra...dan het ons 'n open discussion weet jy...ek vra "Mrs Gad wat maak jy in daardie situasie? Ek het die ding...". Ek wil daardie kind ontwikkel...ek is hier vir raad³³ [Khaya, p. 9].

En toe maak ons kennis met Werda, en daardik het Werda vir my gerig met heele hart en seel want Werda het 'n maneer om hoe sy 'n klas anbiet. Sy maak jou lus vir daardie klas. Toe dink ek...ek kom huis toe van die klas en ek sê vir my ma, 'mamie, ek dink ons moet hierdie ECD program 'n bietjie exciting maak...ek wil die kinders lus maak om creche toe te kom'. My ma vra, 'waar kom die skirigheid nou vandaan? Want jy was vanoggend nie lus vir die klas nie'. Ek sê vir my ma, 'mamie, Werda kom, sy is in 'n goeie mood, sy praat met jou, alles is reg, sy laat jou goed voel in die klas. Ek dink ek moet dit vir my kinders ook doen'³⁴ [Janet, p. 8].

It was tough but I tried my best. I pushed and drove up the wall and down the wall again...but I managed to do what I needed to do and things like that. I kept telling

³² And then I thought...I am going to see if I can attend training, and then I learnt that one must do it, and that you should not just allow children to look, but also to touch...and then I learnt about life skills...oh, but that was such a journey! You know Alice in Wonderland? It was like that for me...and it is still like that! Really, I am discovering a whole new world. You know, the books and the materials that we have and what we write down, one can go keep referring back to those. Such as regards things you might not be familiar with...like perhaps you have a child who is shy, I have children who are shy, and I didn't know how to work with them [Sara, p. 8/9].

³³ I went and I asked...and then we had open discussions...I asked "Mrs Gad, what do you do in such a situation? I have this challenge...". I want to help develop that child...I am here for advice [Khaya, p. 9].

³⁴ En then we got to know Werda, and immediately Werda caught my attention heart and soul because she has a way of presenting the class. She gets you excited about the class. And then I started thinking...I got home from class one day and I said to my mom "Mom, I think we need to make our ECD programme more exciting...I want to make the children excited about coming to the centre". My mom asked "and where does this sudden interest come from? Because this morning you weren't that motivated to go to training! So I told my mom that the Trainer comes, she is in a good mood, she talks to you, everything is okay, she makes you feel good to be in class. I think I should do the same for my children [Janet, p. 8].

my trainer that I can't do it and she would reply "you CAN do it"...and it was through her that I managed to finish it. I was going to give it up. And she said "no you can't" [Beth, p. 1].

In many instances the Trainer plays a vital role regarding the success of the Practitioner. This is especially important in contexts where Practitioners have little prior learning experience and limited access to quality resources and materials. Apart from being a motivating factor for the students, the Trainer also provides access to a wealth of information and knowledge specifically focused on the ECD environment. Needless to say, the values and attitudes held by the Trainer can greatly influence the students that s/he is training. Regarding training strategies, two Practitioners noted that the Level 4 training programmes could be improved using tools such as keeping a journal. They believe that a journal could provide an excellent opportunity to document personal experiences and see how this could influence values and attitudes:

It is good to spend some time being introspective. Keeping a journal could be a very useful tool so that when you experience or see things that have been culturally unfair, or you don't feel that that person has been bias in any way, then you just jot it down and jot your feelings down and things like that. So it makes you realize things because you are sitting down and writing now, and this makes you see in a different way...[Isabel, p. 4].

Journal writing exercises are used at Level Four, however, they focus on the Practitioners experience of how they found the training and how you experienced your time in the classroom as a learner. The suggestion put forward by this Practitioner is that the journal be used as a reflective tool and not only as an evaluation tool, which is the current practice. On the whole Practitioners feel that they do not dedicate sufficient time for critical reflection during training and that activities and strategies are required to encourage them to actively reflect on their experiences and to transform practices which are harmful or bias. It is imperative that Practitioners come to important decisions on their own and through their own process, although training programmes and Trainers in particular can greatly assist in this journey.

Training might not effectively prepare Practitioners for working in a pluricultural setting, however, they acknowledge that there is much to be gained from working in such a diverse context.

In my thirteen years here my classroom has always been diverse. Learning about all the different languages, religions, cultures etc. gives a different perspective of life...it makes me a different person. That I must accept people regardless of colour or what language they speak...We are all human beings, we all have the same feelings...when we are sad we're sad and when we are happy we are happy. I have learnt to accept people [Lizaan, p. 3].

I learnt that although you know the theory that you shouldn't be racist and all that, you don't really know what it means not to be racist until you work with the different cultures. I mean being here in classroom where Jade and Thembi and Victor are all from different cultures... Learning from them has been fascinating, and it has been really interesting seeing what they believe. And if we look at our Jewish families, or our Hindu families this is what they believe in, this is the days that they celebrate. It has been very interesting and it makes me want to listen, and it's teaching you to be more open-minded, because you sort of have to be...and if you want to teach in today's society you have to be open-minded. And that has been a really good thing, because having this these experiences within school environment it sort of becomes a part of you and it's hard to disregard this [Isabel, p. 6].

Vir my is dit exciting...want net so hulle van my leer, so leer ek ook van hulle! Soos hulle leer vir my van hulle culture...soos die twee Angola³⁵ [Janet, p. 3].

I was not exposed to this type of situation until I came to work as before I was a housewife, I was with my own community and at home. So working here I have been exposed to other things, such as different types of cultures. There are so many different cultures here at our centre. You must not just think that "no, no, I don't want to mix with them because they are from the other culture". You have to mix with them, interact, so that you learn more and more and more and then you will be ready to accept all the cultures. If you do not accept them, then you will just stand back and look at them and then just think negative things and make unfair judgements...you don't think of any positive things because you don't know anything...you are just looking and just presuming. I learnt that you must mix up with all the different cultures if you want to be culturally diverse [Adele, p. 7].

5.9 Implementing a specific programme to manage cultural diversity

Practitioners reinforced the findings outlined above which stressed the need for a specific programme which focuses on intercultural interaction, communication and

³⁵ It is exciting for me...because just as they learn from me, so I learn from them! They teach me about their culture...like the who Angolans [Janet, p. 3].

understanding. The implications of the transition to democracy in South Africa have meant a massive increase in exposure to different values, traditions and worldviews. Culture is “dynamic, active, changing, always on the move” (Nieto, 2002: 11), and when people from different backgrounds come into contact with one another such change is to be expected on an even greater scale, which in turn has complex repercussions for identity formation. For some members of this society it might be easy to answer the question “What does ‘culture’ mean to you?”, however, for many that answer does not come readily. Where to situate oneself in a land that is both highly diverse and in a transitional phase has meant that many people have had to redefine who they are, what they identify with and with whom, and what values, attitudes and beliefs they subscribe too. The Practitioners identified that the main concerns which need to be addressed in the early childhood setting, and therefore in any programme designed to meet these challenges are finding ways to get people to mix across barriers, and to foster a respect for the diversity of cultures.

I would focus on getting people to mix with other cultures, teaching them that they must not just live by themselves...and that they must all respect the other cultures, don't just do their thing, they must also include the others...yes, I would aim it at that. [Joy, 9].

I think a programme would obviously look at the different cultures and how they live. How we can treat people with different skin colours with the same respect...and not only race...but like Jessie is diabetic...she was only diagnosed last year and so obviously Jessie was away from the school for a while so we had to explain to the kids, but everyone was fine...so everybody understood that this is Jessie, and Jessie can't eat this and Jessie is going to get her own snack because it's healthy for her. Those are the things that are important and we need to look at. And one of the other things is children with special needs...what if you have a child with special needs in your class...somebody that is in a wheelchair, somebody that needs a facilitator. How will you treat them? How will you react to them? But most importantly...how are we going to support them? So I think that is what I would say...I think the foundation for all of it is what are your principles and your values...and how would you value someone else, and how would you want that person to value you. And that's what a lot of people overlook. They forget that if this was me, I would like people treating me that way. And that's the best thing you can actually teach your child...that you have got to value others the way you want them to value you [Isabel, p. 8].

Kyk ek dink dat die probleme is onse comunication, en ook 'n lack of respect. Ons is almal mense, almal van ons wil die selfde fun en respect hê. So almal is een. Maar en onse gemeenskap dink die mense baie min van hulleself. So daar moet eers daaran gewerk word want 'n mens kannie iets van iemand anders dink nie as jy niks van jouself dink nie. Furthermore, this respect must be entrencehed in society at all levels and in all instances. Dit is vir my so onregverdig, die disability geld word so omgestoot. Maar die kinders wat die geld nodig het, dit word net R 10 opgestoot. Babatjies het baie nodigeede, daar is melk om te koop en alles. En dan kry hulle net so R 210...vir my is dit so unfair. Ek druk my nuus in oorall. Ek praat baie. Ek is nie so gek oor politik, maar ek help graag³⁶ [Janet, p. 15].

The thing is we need to learn to live alongside everybody. We need to find out what is your culture, what is my culture, and find a medium. Mix a little bit of yours and a little bit of mine and then come together. I find that to try and do that is very difficult. To try and find out a bit more about your culture so that I can understand where your child comes from [Beth, p. 13].

We need to foster a strong sense of empathic understanding in people, and respect for diversity....and to see people as people. My children grew up in Namibia, which was wonderful because although it wasn't post independence, it was never like South Africa. So there was integration, we had culturally diverse neighbours, and they went to a school where they were the minority...and we had black friends so it was very different from my upbringing. And it was really interesting because at one time a lot of our friends were having children, and my daughter said to me "if we have a baby, what colour will it be?" so growing up in that culture, in that sort of context, children do not divide like that. And my son one day when we came down to South Africa, he was about 5 at the time and in the shop, I remember him saying, "you know mom, people are all different shades of colour", but he didn't say black and white. I used to store all these things up because I thought this was not a natural thing. It is not natural. We experienced life under apartheid and all the atrocities which this represented...And we can ensure that our children do not have that burden to bear. That's our job. That's where it should start [Sue, p. 12/13].

³⁶ Look, I believe that the problem in communication, and also a lack of respect. We are all people, we all want to have the same fun and the same respect. So everyone is one. But in our community people think very little of themselves. So one needs to work on that first, because you can't respect other people if you don't respect yourself first. Furthermore, this respect must be entrenched in society at all levels and in all instances. It is so unfair to me that the disability grant gets pushed around like that, and that the child support grant continues to be so low, only R 210...it is so unfair. I stick my nose in everywhere. I talk a lot. I am not crazy about politics, but I am more than happy to help where I can [Janet, p. 15].

5.10 Findings from focus groups held with families

The responses gleaned from families at both centres were interesting and diverse. Many of the responses received served to confirm what had been identified by the Practitioners as pressing issues within South Africa as pertains to intercultural relationships and fostering respect for cultural diversity.

There is currently a sense of uncertainty which has taken hold in South Africa, with the country going “*up and down, up and down*” as one father commented. Most of the families agreed that due to South Africa’s historical background of oppression, exploitation and racism, many families are desperately trying to provide better educational opportunities for their children, but many poor families are still greatly disadvantaged. All the families acknowledged that building relationships across the different racial groups is extremely challenging, especially as they feel that the power is still in the hands of too few. There is a serious inferiority / superiority complex which persists as a legacy from the colonialist and apartheid eras, which needs to be addressed. One grandmother, who is a cleaner at a former Model C High School in Queenstown, noted with distaste that the employment of educators at this school is still largely influenced by skin colour, with fifteen white educators and two Black African educators employed at this school. The government is seen to be failing dismally at ensuring that skills and resources are equitably distributed across education centres, which sustains the lack of understanding across cultures in the society. A mother talked about the experience of “twinning” at her own school, whereby a school with limited resources partners up with a better resourced school in order to engage with each other and exchange ideas, practices and experiences. As she succinctly put it:

A blind person cannot lead a blind person, so it is very necessary that we establish partnerships to link schools with fewer resources to those who have qualified, experienced teachers, as well as resources and facilities which other schools can only dream of. Everyone stands to gain from such an initiative [Family 3, p. 4].

The frustration of families with regards to how they experienced life under apartheid was a recurring theme in both focus groups. Many families believed that people

are “fighting through their children”, and that many need to “stop being stubborn and resisting change” in order to foster respect for the different cultures living together. The anger that many families feel is perhaps as a result of the frustration of the rate of change of things in South Africa since the demise of apartheid. One uncle gave an example of a situation which angers people:

There is a very well known agricultural college that a friend of ours went to and they are also totally segregated. So it's happening. And it's because things have never been resolved, so they have just calcified actually. And it's all underground and it has not been resolved. And you are starting to see at the moment a lot of aggression, a lot of it is manifesting now. And the sooner we can get to grips with it, the better. The further we move away from the past, the more we lose perspective...we lose sight of the real problem. Because we are looking at the problems right now and saying that things are not very good, but we are forgetting what happened. If it had been resolved then fine...we could move on [Family 27, p. 18].

Families suggested that a good place to start in order to change the status quo is to begin to change ourselves as individuals, “to change our mentality”, accepting that to respect cultural, linguistic and religious diversity does not mean to sacrifice one's own identity. Rather, much can be gained from learning about other people's way of life. As one father emphatically pointed out:

Families are inculcating their children with values which don't respect the democracy of this country. It would make a huge difference if families taught their children according to the values enshrined in the constitution [Family 7, p. 3].

Another family member pointed out that the baggage that has been carried over from the apartheid years affects everyone, not only those who were systematically oppressed. She, herself white, talked about an experience that she had, which has heavily impacted on her values and behaviour.

Apartheid, it was such a big issue. And you live with guilt, one lives with tremendous guilt. I can remember coming on a school bus... I used to go to school in Durban and used to catch a train and then a bus into town. And sitting on this bus, there were two rows at the back that were for black people. And the rest of the bus was for white people. And there was this British guy on this bus and there

were some black people wanting to get on this bus. And the bus conductor very politely said “I am sorry, but this bus is full” –the two rows were full and the rest of the bus was empty. And then this guy [the British man] got off the bus... I must have been in about Std. 6, and he tore a strip off this conductor, and this conductor said I am sorry but it is my job. And the man just shouted “You are nothing but a bloody white cabbage”. And he stormed off the bus. And this left such an impression on me. So we lived with this tremendous feeling of guilt...of not being able to do anything about something that was so powerful [Family 15, p. 9].

Another mother, reflecting on the past and its influence on the present, believes that reflecting on ways to respect cultural diversity and to find strategies to foster social integration in ECD centres is vitally important for the South African society.

I think it is a very pertinent topic. And it’s imperative to have workshops and get people to think about really where they are at... Because we all have baggage...there is nobody who is untouched by the past. But unless we sit down and confront it, and work out strategies to work with it, we are never going to get through that [Family 32, p. 7].

Although brought to a close in 1994, apartheid had succeeded in one thing – creating an atmosphere of fear, mistrust and a severe lack of understanding amongst diverse cultural groups. People’s lived experiences, both past and present, indicate the values and attitudes which continue to permeate South African society. According to the participants from the two focus groups, the main challenges to achieving social integration are:

- The value placed on English above other African languages
- Cultural clashes due to a serious lack of interaction between cultures
- Changing of cultural values, whereby younger generations lose respect for their culture
- Lack of respect for, and understanding of, the different cultural values and how these influence our lives

A few families stressed the importance of children learning about their own culture, as well as the cultural beliefs and practices of others. One parent expressed her concern of children losing touch with their cultural origins:

I feel sometimes that our children are losing their cultural heritage. My brother has got children in Johannesburg, all boys...they were supposed to be big men now, they were supposed to be initiated...go to the bush³⁷. But the mother, since they were being schooled in white schools, said that “my child can’t go there and do those things”...now they are like the whites. So I said, they are trying to be like the white people...but they are blacks so they will never be white people. And they have got their own culture...and the culture, if the child loses his culture now, how is he going to teach his own children the Xhosa culture? [Family 4, p. 7].

The changing of cultural beliefs and practices is a complex matter which must be taken into account in societies where diverse cultures come into contact with one another, and as people decide for themselves which aspects of culture to follow, and which to discard. The changes that take place from one generation to another as regards cultural norms and values were identified as a big challenge. This was especially true of the Xhosa families who noted that their children are losing their ties to the rural areas and to their mother tongue in favour of an urban, English-speaking lifestyle. Although this in itself is not seen as terribly wrong, the problem is that many of the younger generation have begun to devalue their cultural heritage and see it as backwards. One woman used the example of her cousin in Grahamstown, whose children do not know their own grandmother because of language problems, noting that “*language is like the pillars of a culture*”. Thus, families strongly felt that young children need to be taught about their own and other cultural beliefs and practices, and that it is the responsibility of both the families and ECD Practitioners to do so. Some of the strategies identified as necessary for the promotion of respect for diversity included reading stories to children which deal with social ills such as discrimination, racism and so forth; discussing differences both in the classroom and at home; integrating cultures in a more two-sided approach; and providing all stakeholders with information as to the need for achieving transformation. Families fully supported the development of a programme in ECD which looks at the challenges of living and working in a culturally diverse environment. They noted that it is vital that the different cultures in the ECD classroom be recognized, and that children are open to learning about such differences.

³⁷ This is Xhosa circumcision ritual usually undertaken when the boy is between thirteen and sixteen years old.



The researcher and families engaged in a focus group discussion.
Photograph taken by Marc Rius Viladomiu

The spate of xenophobic attacks across South Africa was highlighted as an indication of the serious lack of positive values in society. This, coupled with the violent behaviour of those orchestrating the attacks indicates that much has to be done before transformation and integration can be achieved.

You know, like in Johannesburg many people were saying people from Mozambique, from Zimbabwe are taking the jobs and all that. When you feel threatened you don't understand how we can live...you don't respect other people. In fact, we dwell so much on the past that we can't make a meaningful contribution to the present. And with holding those views we cannot move towards integration. And what each and every one should be doing is working towards achieving real integration among other people, no matter how different they are. Probably you won't even see the difference, because in the end you are really just one. And another thing, sometimes you find that these nationals from other countries sometimes they are better off than us. And it's a problem...it really is a problem if we cannot accept one another through the racial barriers and national barriers; it is a problem because it means that we cannot understand

the value of being human. And the impact we have on each other's lives. Think of it now...we need to travel and do you think that we will be safe now when we travel? If everybody holds the same view that the people who are doing these things in Jo'burg? We have to focus on ourselves and first correct the mistakes and views that you hold about other people. It's quite distorted...yes, it's not right and it needs to be addressed If you don't use your analytical mind then you will never see the truth and will make the same mistakes because you are influenced by those around you too much [Family 12, p. 17].

The grandfather who made this statement alludes to numerous issues which plague interaction, including the supposed 'threat' presented by foreign nationals as well as the lack of values and positive attitudes which are needed to provide a solid foundation upon which intercultural relations can be developed. The role of families in instilling in their children values and attitudes which do respect others and their diverse cultural backgrounds is put across by a mother who writes that:

Many of the parents grew up in apartheid times and had a very different education. Others lack education about this topic and then are prejudice or practice discrimination. If they could be educated it would make a big difference to our society. Look at these attacks in Joburg...it is parents who are doing that...they are uninformed about the foreigners and then they attack them. It is very scary...we don't know when or where it is going to stop. And what example are they setting for their children?? Children learn from the behaviour of parents...and these people need to realise that they have a responsibility to teach their children positive values, not negative ones. And what are these people thinking? We call ourselves Africans but we are killing our brothers and our sisters. In my child's class there is one boy who is from Zimbabwe. Now what would happen if the other parents didn't like that? Must that poor boy and his family pay the price because they came here to find a better life? [Family 40, p. 25].

Most of the families believed that the relationship between the Practitioner and the families was an important one. In both focus groups families stated that a good relationship was essential, as when the child is not at home with the families then s/he is at the centre, where the Practitioner is the primary caregiver. Families recognised that Practitioners and families should share any concerns they may have regarding a child in order to find solutions. Furthermore, it was pointed out that this interaction should be continuous, *"as here we are moulding a child, moulding a future whatever the child will*

be...and at the end of the day you lose nothing by trying to instil good in young children”. The families that were part of this focus group had a better relationship with their children’s ECD Practitioner (it is doubtful that they would have come to the parent-teacher meeting if this was not the case); however, they acknowledged that there was definite room for improvement. They mentioned that stress in their daily lives such as time pressures and working far away from home negatively impacted their involvement in the centre life. However, considering that the majority of families did not attend this meeting with the Practitioner (or other meetings of this nature), it can be inferred that most families are not actively involved in their children’s educational experience.

As regards cultural diversity, families expressed the desire to be more involved in what was happening in the classroom environment. As one family member mused:

What if my child is coming home with their cultural questions, how is he or she going to respond if I say that you know what, I don’t know...But I think that if the Practitioners do it with children and at the same time the families know that this is what the Practitioner is doing, then that is really nice. Roosbank [a school] has a nice thing where if they are learning about something, they send a letter home to the families saying that this is what they are learning about this term, can you please encourage it, and help your child to find information about one of these and sort of sit with your child so that she can make a poster to have as their own. And in that way the family is learning about the same thing that the child is learning. And at the same time you sort of know that this is what I need to find out about...this is what the family needs to know because this is what their children are learning about [Family 7, p. 13].

Families are fully aware that the educational experiences of their children are vastly different to their own experiences, and that cultural diversity presents many challenges in a society where values and attitudes were marred by racism, discrimination and hatred. According to families, a specific programme which encourages the use of critical thought and reflection and which helps people neutralise and change the ingrained values and attitudes which they hold, has a fundamental role to play in ensuring that the children today become respectful, empathetic adults.

The other thing is that people may be different, whether it’s by colour, by language or whatever...but it’s like that analogy about the rivers in the world – so many rivers, so many different names...and maybe the water in them tastes

different, but actually, all of them flow into the ocean. Now, in terms of people, we base our experiences of difference of people in terms of race, or colour...and if, I am Xhosa, and someone who is Sotho wrongs me, will I condemn all of those people who are Sotho? It is not right to think like that. You cannot generalise...so if you can understand that anybody is capable of offence and this is not linked to colour, race etc. then one can accept other people and have respect for them. I mean it's really disheartening when you see bad things happening...especially by people here in South Africa. But we can begin to change all that...let's do better for our children [Family 22, p.32].

5.11 Discussion

The analysis presented above offers a generalized way of looking at and thinking about what goes on in ECD classrooms as pertains to cultural diversity. The issues that have been identified indicate the complexity of classroom life, as well as the vital role played by Practitioners and families in managing cultural diversity. Perhaps one of the most important findings is that Practitioners contribute a great deal to the well-being of the children in their care, and that there is a need to increase their sensitivity to their own habitual ways of responding to children and their families. Practitioners exhibited a definite interest in building bridges where cultural differences presented problems in understanding and communicating. However, it is clear that there is a serious need for a specific programme in ECD which aids Practitioners in reflecting on how the challenges of working in a pluricultural environment manifest on a daily basis, as well as ways to deal with this. Looking at the ECD setting in both a descriptive and reflective capacity could greatly assist Practitioners and families to identify the elements of the programme which need to be improved in order to provide young children with the supportive environment so important to their healthy development.

Without adequate preparation for working with children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, Practitioners adopted what Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Team (1989) label the 'tourist approach'. Vandenbroeck (1999: 135) critiques the tourist approach as a way of 'teaching' children about different cultures, pointing out that this approach is "paternalistic and accentuates the exotic differences instead of dealing with situations from daily life". The 'othering' that takes place by adopting such an approach is obvious. The 'other' cultures are made into something static, exotic, and different from

the 'normal', dominant culture which continues to prevail unquestioned. The power is therefore continually held by the 'main' culture which does things 'the right way' (Brown, 1998 in Vandenbroeck, 1999) as opposed to the 'other' cultures. Another concerning feature of the tourist approach is that there is no place for individualism as most often the opinions of the members of the cultures that are on display are not considered (Ibid). That is, few cultures are actually dealt with, thereby undermining the diversity present. The real danger in this approach is clearly the stereotyping as well as the possibility of negatively contributing to the self-image of the person whose culture is being represented. This approach can therefore have many effects including trivialization, where activities are only connected to feasts or food, and whereby families are only involved at these times resulting in tokenism, as well as stereotyping (Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force, 1989).

In early childhood children are responsive to learning values of mutual respect and understanding. Practitioners and families exert a powerful influence which helps both determine and shape the values and attitudes which children internalize, and they need to be aware of the responsiveness of the children to the values and attitudes which they themselves hold. This requires reflective practice on the parts of Practitioners and families. Through adopting an intercultural approach to education, Practitioners and families can move away from merely identifying that there is more than one culture, to learning and attempting to negotiate between cultures. In any attempt to adopt an intercultural approach, it is imperative that histories, contexts and practices are explored in order to facilitate understanding. This is a complex, but very necessary, exercise.

Although living in heterogeneous societies can lead to inequality and discrimination, it also provides children, Practitioners and families with opportunities for cultural exploration as well as exchange. Early childhood development centres provide excellent opportunities to create 'meeting places' and 'common spaces' where respect for diversity and the values and attitudes necessary to accomplish this are reflected (Bernard van Leer, 2006). Apart from reinforcing a positive self-identity in young children, by implementing a specific intercultural education programme structural barriers can also be challenged, with the long-term outcome of creating more socially cohesive societies.

The outcome of a programme implemented in the early years is dependant on the meaningful participation of families, which, as has been noted in this study, is not easy to achieve. However, a programme can serve as the perfect strategy to draw families in, engaging them in their children's educational experience, as well as providing them with the opportunity to critically reflect on issues and challenges, as well as the benefits, of living in a culturally diverse environment. The promotion of positive interactions, empathy and respect is an imperative part of any educational initiative. This moreover in a society which has been stratified for many years along the lines of race. Certainly, apartheid and its consequences sit at the forefront of the minds of many of the Practitioners and families involved in this study. Its effects have echoed down the halls of time, and the fifteen years since it was demolished is not near sufficient to work through the decades of human rights abuses and the scars that this has left.

Taking into account the challenges identified by Practitioners and families regarding the managing of cultural diversity in ECD centres, interculturalism serves as a framework for the development of a specific intercultural education programme aimed at addressing these challenges. Such a programme would assist Practitioners to reflect on their current practices within the ECD classroom in relation to cultural diversity, with the aim of moving away from the tokenistic ways in which they manage diversity in their centres. The involvement of families would be key to the success of such a programme, as strategies would need to be developed to draw them in.

Although this dissertation works from the perspective that it is fundamental to address the values and attitudes held by Practitioners and families in order to improve intercultural relationships and communication in the ECD centre, the ultimate aim of the programme suggested above is to improve the educational experience of young children. Children's acute interest in learning about the world means that they are keenly aware of what is happening around them. If primary caregivers do not display behaviour which encourages children to establish healthy relationships with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, to respect difference and to show empathetic understanding to whomever may need it, there is little hope that peaceful and cohesive societies can be constructed.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.) South Africa remains a deeply divided society and initiatives which aim to improve understanding and build bridges between different cultural groups are urgently required.
- 2.) Transformation of the values and attitudes promoted during apartheid, such as fear and mistrust of people different to oneself, the institutionalization of racism, and the denial of basic human rights, is an important starting point in order to promote respect for diversity and social integration within the society.
- 3.) The first years of a child's life is an important time within which to model positive intercultural communication and understanding. ECD Practitioners and families are largely responsible for this modeling, and their beliefs and behaviour influence what values and attitudes children internalize. Both Practitioners and families need to be targeted in any programme which aims to promote respect for diverse cultural groups.
- 4.) There is a need for the implementation of a specific intercultural education programme in early childhood development centres to assist Practitioners and families to move away from their predominantly tokenistic approach to cultural diversity. Such a programme would include critically engaging with issues such as racism, discrimination and prejudice, which remain a key feature in South African society. Although this study has focused almost exclusively on cultural diversity, other forms of diversity and types of exclusion need to be explored, such as the impact of HIV/AIDS, gender discrimination, socioeconomic marginalization and so forth.
- 5.) Drawing on the lived experience of people would be imperative in such a programme, as many still carry the scars of living under the oppressive apartheid regime. Creating spaces for intercultural interaction is vital, as well as challenging people to explore different cultural beliefs and values in a more in-depth manner.

- 6.) Intercultural communication would be the foundation of any specific programme implemented. Strategies need to be identified which could assist in breaking down barriers between people. It is essential that people engage with one another in order to overcome the tensions which apartheid institutionalized.
- 7.) In communities where the socioeconomic situation of families is dire, it is especially important that any programme implemented helps families understand that they have much to contribute to their children's education. By extending their knowledge base and increasing their confidence they could be more open to becoming involved in the ECD centre and thereby greatly enhance the learning experience of their children.
- 8.) The current Practitioner training programmes do not sufficiently address the challenges of working in a culturally diverse environment. Practitioners are therefore not fully equipped to successfully deal with promoting respect for diversity and social integration. This further promotes the need for the implementation of a specific intercultural educational programme in the early childhood development field.



Two young children engaging in outdoor play.
Photograph taken by Jaclyn Murray

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ANNEXES

Annexure 1. Interview guide for Early Childhood Development Practitioners.

TEM	QUESTION
1	What do you believe are the aims of early childhood development programmes? How are these aims realized?
2	When we talk about intercultural education, what comes to mind?
3	How do you think young children between the ages of 3 and 6 years can benefit from participating in an intercultural education project?
4	Does your ECD centre have any policies regarding social inclusion/exclusion?
5	Can you tell me about your own educational experiences?
6	How have these experiences impacted on you and your role as educator? Can you provide any examples?
7	What values do you think are important for children to be exposed to as they grow and learn in a multicultural context?
8	What attitudes do you think are important for children to be exposed to as they grow up and learn in a multicultural context?
9	What are some of the key challenges that you confront as an educator in a culturally diverse context?
10	How do you address these challenges? Can you give some examples?
11	Can you tell me about how your Level 4 training might have helped you gain knowledge about working in a multicultural classroom?
12	What curriculum do you follow in your educational programme?
13	What does the curriculum you follow specify about intercultural education and social inclusion?
14	How much flexibility do you have regarding the implementation of the curriculum?
15	What strategies do you use to incorporate and teach children from culturally diverse backgrounds?
16	What guides and influences your practice in a culturally diverse classroom?
17	How do the children relate with one another in your classroom?
18	Do you think that the children feel socially included in your classroom? How so?
19	How would you describe your relationships with the children's families? What factors facilitate or inhibit these relationships?
20	How often do you meet with families? Individually or in a group? In what context?
21	How involved are the children's families in the centre? And in the educational programme in specific?

22	How do families feel about being involved?
23	How satisfied are you with the level of involvement of the families?
24	How do feel when communicating with families whose culture is different to your own?
25	How do you feel about the level of communication that you have with these families?
26	What is the relationship for a child between the home and the ECD centre environment?
27	In your opinion what impact does a child attending a culturally diverse ECD centre have on her/his family and home environment?
28	What have you learnt about the beliefs and practices of other cultures through your work in a multicultural classroom?
29	Do situations of prejudice and discrimination arise in your classroom? If so, what form does this take and how do you deal with it?
30	What resources are necessary to address diversity and promote social inclusion amongst the young children in your care?

Annexure 2. Participant Observation guide.

	AREA		TO OBSERVE
1.	Centre environment	1.	Who drops off and collects the children before and after school?
		2.	What interactions take place?
		3.	What is talked about?
		4.	Who is present in the centre during the school day?
		5.	How do these people interact with one another?
		6.	What values and attitudes are reflected by their conversations?
		7.	How are children received at the centre?
		8.	How committed and motivated are the educators?
2.	Classroom environment (materials, resources, classroom setup, wall displays, etc.)	9.	What materials and resources are there for the children to play with?
		10.	How has the classroom been setup?
		11.	What is displayed on the walls of the classroom?
		12.	How can the climate of the classroom be described?
3.	Educational programme (pedagogical practices, lesson plan, daily routine)	13.	What pedagogical practices are engaged in?
		14.	How are these practices organized and explained?
		15.	What themes are covered in the lesson plan?
		16.	What language is used to communicate verbally and non-verbally?
		17.	How do teachers consciously integrate a multicultural approach into their lesson plan?
4.	Adult-child interaction (educators responses, language tone, actions towards children and vice versa)	18.	How do educators respond to children during the school day?
		19.	What language and language tone do educators use with the children?
		20.	How do children respond to educators during the school day?

		21.	What is talked about?
		22.	What challenges/issues arise?
		23.	How are these dealt with?
		24.	Listen for stereotypes, discriminatory language or actions
5.	Child-child interaction	25.	How do children relate to one another?
		26.	What language is used to communicate?
		27.	Who plays with whom?
		28.	What games are played?
		29.	What is talked about?
		30.	What games are played during free time?
		31.	What challenges/issues arise?
		32.	How are these dealt with?

Annexure 3. Focus group interview guide for families.

ITEM	QUESTIONS
1	What do you believe are the aims of early childhood development programmes?
2	How would you describe the relationship between your child and a.) her / his Practitioner and b.) her / his classmates?
3	When we talk about intercultural education, what comes to mind?
4	How do you think young children between the ages of 3 and 6 years can benefit from participating in an intercultural education project?
5	What differences can you see between your educational experiences and that of your child today?
6	How have your experiences affected how you interact with people from different cultural backgrounds?
7	What does social integration mean to you?
8	What values do you think are important for children to be exposed to as they grow and learn in a multicultural context?
9	What attitudes do you think are important for children to be exposed to, grow up and learn in a multicultural context?
10	How often do you communicate with your child's ECD Practitioner? In what context?
11	How would you describe your relationship with your child's educator?
12	How involved are you in the ECD centre? And in the educational programme in specific?
13	How do you view the relationship between the home and the ECD centre environment?
14	How has your child attending a culturally diverse ECD centre impacted on your family? Has this impacted on your values and attitudes in any way? If so, how?
15	What aspirations do you have for your children's educational future?